

Symbolism of  
The Divine Comedy

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THE DIVINE COMEDY

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# SYMBOLISM OF THE DIVINE COMEDY

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## INTRODUCTION

THIS scholarly and significant study of the symbolism of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is appropriately published at a time when the whole world is celebrating the greatness of the poet as it marks the 600th anniversary of his death. Of the millions of human voices a few score are heard for a generation, perhaps as many as a dozen for a century, and but very, very few for all time. To strike the chord of human insight and human feeling that will vibrate unceasingly while time flies is a mark of genius so rare that it is the highest form of human achievement. The poet of mankind must speak a particular language, but he may speak it in a way that will confound the Tower of Babel and make the whole world understand. This has been done by Homer in Greek, by Dante in Italian, by Shakespeare in English, and by Goethe in German. Each of the four was in and for his time not only poet but philosopher; and it is the philosophy which has made the poetry live and which has given it a universal appeal.

Of all the forces which make for the solidarity and common interest of mankind, that set in motion by these four poets is the most powerful, the most constant, and the most long-continuing. They have taught men of different lands, of conflicting creeds, and of varying tongues, to think and to feel in common about the noblest experiences and the loftiest aspirations of life. They are both the prophets, the heralds, and the makers of a world's progress, seemingly so slow and so painful, toward those higher things which are, for human thinking, the aim and the purpose of all creation.

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER

*November 1, 1921*

# SYMBOLISM OF THE DIVINE COMEDY

## ARIADNE'S CROWN

As has often been remarked, each canticle of the *Divine Comedy* ends with the word "*stelle*," or stars. Usually, these "stars" have been understood to be emblems of hope. This symbolism holds, but only as one item in a rich and complex system. Taken in the larger sense, as including the planets, the stars are the instruments by which the angels, God's agents, inform and govern all earthly things, physical and spiritual. It is a natural metaphor, therefore, to ascribe to the stars themselves, proportionably, the divine powers that act through them; and, further, by second intention, to describe as stars all human powers of analogous function. This is the central metaphor of the whole poem, and indeed of Christian theology itself, so far as that clothed its abstract ideas in sensuous

imagery. And this theology did habitually; since, as Beatrice told Dante,

“Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno,  
 Però che solo da sensato apprende  
 Ciò che fa poscia d'intelletto degno.”<sup>1</sup>

If the use of sensuous symbols was thus primarily to bring the supersensible home to creatures of sense, yet in the handling of subtle and ingenious metaphysicians and mystics it too often ceased to be illustrative and simplifying, and became—in almost a mathematical sense—an intricate and esoteric symbolic logic. There were, moreover, two contributory reasons for this esoterism in theological writing. One was the belief that God revealed himself not only under the letter of Scripture, but also under the visible forms of nature,—that in fine “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork,” actually as a picture-language, or system of hieroglyphs, intelligible to specially illumined eyes. And the second reason followed from this last notion. Since God, the great Teacher, hides his deeper meaning from all but a few chosen ones, so should these thus taken, as it were,

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* iv, 41-42.

into his confidence, keep jealous guard over his secret, communicating it only under seal to others like themselves ordained and initiate. So the justifying purpose of symbolic writing was deliberately inverted: from being a method of bringing abstruse ideas to the comprehension of simple minds it became virtually a cipher decodable only by those holding the key. At most, outsiders, the laity, might be given such general and practical direction as might serve for their immediate need. There were plenty of scriptural texts to warrant this exclusiveness. Thus St. Bonaventure quotes Matthew vii, 6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas emphasizes St. Paul's text: "*Non plus sapere quam oportet sapere.*"<sup>3</sup> And St. Thomas sums up the whole esoteric argument in his explanation of Christ's parabolic teaching: "Christ spoke certain things in secret to the crowds, by employing parables in teaching them spiritual mysteries which they were either unable or unworthy to grasp: and yet

<sup>2</sup> *Illuminationes ecclesiae*, i, prin°.

<sup>3</sup> *In Rom.* xii, 3. Dante substantially translates it in the "Non domandar più che utile ti sia" of *Vita Nuova* xii, 40-41.

it was better for them to be instructed in the knowledge of spiritual things, albeit hidden under the garb of parables, than to be deprived of it altogether. Nevertheless our Lord expounded the open and unveiled truth of these parables to His disciples, so that they might hand it down to others worthy of it.”<sup>4</sup> Dante accepted this doctrine, which also for him was accentuated by the literary esoterism of such poetic models as his favorite Arnaut Daniel. Indeed, he is almost supercilious in his recommendation to the intellectually “ungentle” reader of his symbolic canzone:

“Ponete mente almen com’ io son bella.”<sup>5</sup>

And with like haughtiness he advises all small craft to put back to shore from the deep waters of his *Paradise*, lest they lose their bearings.<sup>6</sup> Dante has not left his course uncharted, but the right reading of his log demands, among other things, a more intimate familiarity with what I may call the theological “shop-talk” of the thirteenth century than it is easy at this date to acquire.

<sup>4</sup> *S. T.* III, xlii, 3—transl. Domin. Fathers, London, 1914.

<sup>5</sup> *Conv.* II, Canz. I, 61.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* ii, 1-6.



For instance, the schoolmen would appear to have indexed, as it were, intellectual leaders, contemporary and earlier, by special "virtues"—in Walter Pater's sense of that word. It is a habit, more or less critical, of all times. Petronius illustrates it when he tagged the poets,—"*Homerus testis et lyrici, romanusque Vergilius et Horati curiosa felicitas.*"<sup>7</sup> So Thomas Lodge, when he indexed "Lilly, the famous for facility in discourse: Spencer, best read in ancient Poetry: Daniel, choise in word, and inuention: Draiton, diligent and formal: Th. Nash, true English Aretine," etc.<sup>8</sup> In recent times, Arnold and Pater have made the formulation of such special "virtues" of authors the principal business of literary criticism. Once authoritatively so indexed, any author is likely to become popularly fixed in that particular frame. It is what, to the general mind, he "stands for." Others besides Horace have exhibited a "curious felicity" in style; still "*curiosa felicitas*" as a critical tag means Horace, and vice versa. Ask almost any fairly educated middle-aged person today what Wordsworth "stands for," and he will probably reply,—"the healing-

<sup>7</sup> *Sat.* 118.

<sup>8</sup> *Wits Miserie*, p. 57.

power of Nature." Mention the phrase, and he will at once name Wordsworth. The poet's "virtue" has become his identification-card. Now the medieval intellectual, drilled his life long in the categories and schematisms of scholastic logic, was even more addicted to such short-hand formulas and classificatory tags.<sup>9</sup> To him would have been apparent, I think, the identifying clue to the various symbolic arrangements which Dante makes of the doctors and saints listed in his heaven of the Sun. What for the present writer at least, is frankly but laborious inference or more or less plausible guess, would have been for him immediate and certain recognition. Dante and his theologically trained reader—remember he warned off all others from the *Paradise*—spoke the same language. And so would be accounted for his manner of introducing his various personages. Some he cites merely by name. These are presented manifestly on the ground of their currently accepted "virtues." To the names of others he adds a few words or lines of characterization. These pithy, and for us sometimes enigmatic, descriptions are not, like Tennyson's in his

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the striking example from St. Bonaventure, below p. 30.

*Dream of Fair Women*, merely for dramatic or picturesque effect. On the contrary, they are rigorously didactic. By them Dante selects from current appreciations—or, it may be, originates—an appreciation of his character's virtue special to Dante's present use of him. It is the method of the *Comedy* throughout. Thus the name of Bonaventure might by itself suggest some special virtue of eloquence or doctrine. I do not know. But Dante wishes us to see in him the ideal ecclesiastic who rightly "set aside the lefthand care" of things temporal, who renounced as cardinal what the pope and the Church as a whole should renounce. That renouncement is, in Dante's message, his *virtue*, what he "stands for" in heaven. St. Anselm, on the other hand, is merely named. In his case, Dante would appeal to the current appreciation, which hailed Anselm as the subtle reasoner of the *Cur Deus Homo*,—an appreciation which, I believe, still holds.

Fortunately, indeed, we are not dependent solely upon such positive knowledge of fact. Behind Dante's symbols and lists of personages is a philosophical system. That is, of course, what he means by calling his poem a multiple allegory. So if we know his philo-

sophical system, we can reasonably expect to set the representatives of its categories where in accordance with generally accepted or specially declared appreciation they fit. To do this is at once the purpose and the method of the following enquiry.

The present writer, then, expects to have many of his particular conclusions traversed. He is well aware of the tenuousness of some of his chains of evidence, and of the doubtfulness of his choices of particular symbolic interpretations. The chief trouble, however, lies not in the lack of evidence and authority for such interpretations, but in the bewildering variety of interpretations authorized by Dante's theological masters. The writer feels confident, therefore, that Dante intended such things as are contained in this essay, and that to seek them out is necessary if we wish to understand his great poem in its full range. Let others, if they so will, be content to consider merely how beautiful it is,—though even so they will miss much of its deeper beauty.

The particular symbol presently discussed,—the "sign in the heavens" of Ariadne's Crown,—proves to be no mere incidental metaphorical image, but one central to the

whole imagery, and therefore to the whole conception, of the *Comedy*. This is natural; since that abstract conception is clothed and conveyed most deeply in symbolic imagery, and that imagery is based, as already said, upon the assumed equivalence of God, primal giver of the two life-controlling factors of intellect and will perfected in wisdom and love, with the Sun, which centrally radiates light and heat, essential factors of physical life and growth. This analogy appears everywhere. The Bible becomes the Sun, whose light-ray bred Dominic and his disciples, whose heat-ray Francis and his. The "three blessed ladies,"—Mary, Lucia, Beatrice,—who conspire to save Dante repeat the same triad. From Mary's divinity as "Sun," comes the light-ray of spiritual insight, which is St. Lucia, and the heat-ray of love, which is Beatrice. And the focussing of these two upon one soul produces that *intelletto d'amore* which is the perfection of human nature and the faculty in common of angels and the blest. Again, on the highest plane, the same relationship is repeated for the Trinity. As Lucia proceeds from Mary, carrying her light, and Beatrice proceeds from them both, carrying her heat of love, so the Son, the Lo-

gos, proceeds from the Father as the "Light of the world," and the Holy Spirit from them both as the principle of burning love.<sup>10</sup> Dante's own salvation is explained by St. Thomas in terms of this metaphor:

"Lo raggio della grazia, onde s'accende  
Verace amore, e che poi cresce amando  
Moltiplicato, in te tanto risplende  
Che ti conduce su per quella scala  
U'senza risalir nessun discende."<sup>11</sup>

At first mediately through the "three blessed ladies" and their various agents and instruments, at last Dante's sight is strengthened to receive the direct ray of the divine Sun itself.<sup>12</sup> In this "*fulgore*" not only is Dante illumined

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Albert. Mag., *De. Laud. b. Mar. Virg.* XII, v, i, 2: "Per solem saepius interpretatur Pater, per radium vel splendorem solis Filius qui est splendor gloriae et figura Patris, per calorem Spiritus sanctus . . . Spiritus enim sanctus est amor Patris et Filii. Sicut autem radius vel splendor solis, ex quo sol fuit, processit a sole et procedit semperque procedet: sic Filius aeternaliter procedit a Patre. Et sicut calor aeternaliter procedit tam a sole quam a radio: sic Spiritus sanctus ab utroque, id est Filio et Patre . . . Aliter: In sole quia circuit mundi machinam, signatur Patris potentia: in splendore qui totum illuminat, Filii sapientia: in fervore qui totum calefacit, Spiritus sancti benevolentia."

<sup>11</sup> *Par.* x, 83-87. Cf. *Purg.* xv, 64-73; *Par.* v, 7-9; xxi, 83-87.

<sup>12</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 140-141.



as to God's essence, so achieving in the instant of rapture that perfect understanding of the mystery of the Trinity which is the eternal reward of the doctors of his heaven of the Sun, but also receives the chrism of apostleship by which, like his model the Apostle Paul, he will himself pass on the light to others. There will be fulfilled the promise symbolized in the "apostolic light" of St. Peter thrice encircling him,<sup>13</sup> as this symbol is in effect a variant of the threefold crowning by the spirits of the Sun. For St. Peter individually, as these spirits collectively, represents the teaching and authority of the Church.

So Dante himself becomes a "sun" to light the minds and kindle the hearts of his fellow-men, or—to pass to the equivalent biblical image—a "chosen vessel"<sup>14</sup> filled with wisdom, "bread of angels," a pot of manna of true faith deposited in the ark of the covenant embodied in the Church.

Thus the symbolic implications and analogues of the radiant Sun extend themselves into all parts and personages of the poem. The maze of their intricate correspondences

<sup>13</sup> *Par.* xxiv, 151-154.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Inf.* ii, 28; *Par.* i, 14.

has hardly been explored, yet by exploring it we can, I think, attain to the very center of Dante's meaning and also by the way chart accurately the bearings of particular meanings hitherto obscure. A good instance in point is the perplexing glorification of the heretic Sigier of Brabant.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the difficulty of such investigation is to avoid being drawn on into a commentary on the whole poem when the investigator would fain concentrate on a particular part of it. Correspondence calls to correspondence. Any path entered upon opens into innumerable others, and each of these into as many more.

#### THE TRIPLE CROWN

The two poles of the Christian heaven are the vision of God and the provision of God. The terms are manifestly ambiguous. They may mean, on the one hand, God's vision of, and provision for, man; and, on the other hand, man's vision of, and provision towards, God. God's vision and provision—or providence—are both immediate and eternal. The execution of his plan, however, is temporal, is indeed the course of the world in time.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See below, pp. 48 et seq.

<sup>16</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* I, xxii, 1.

Man's vision of God may be either immediate and eternal, or mediate and temporal. Immediate and eternal vision of God is for man the reward of salvation in the future life, when his soul shall have been separated from the earthly body, but—after the Judgment-Day—re clothed with the heavenly and glorified body. In that beatific vision, he shall, in St. Paul's phrase, see God "face to face,"<sup>17</sup> or, in theological phrase, know God in his essence. The intellectual vision is the essential reward. Effect of it upon man's will, in the disposition of perfect charity, perfect love of God, is the accidental reward.<sup>18</sup> The doubly perfect conjunction of the soul with God in intellect and will is called the golden crown (*corona aurea*)—or simply *aurea*—of the blest, and signifies participation in God's "royal power" and "a certain perfection by reason of its circular form." Also, certain chosen ones shall receive for especially meritorious works a second crown, the aureole.<sup>19</sup> And the aureole is due above all to virgins, victorious over the flesh, martyrs, victorious over the world, doctors, who by preaching the

<sup>17</sup> *I Cor.* xiii, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Par.* xxxiii, 142-145.

<sup>19</sup> St. Thomas, *IV Sent.* xlix, 5, 1, c.

faith are victorious over the devil.<sup>20</sup> All three are teachers,—by example if not by precept.

The two crowns, *aurea* and aureole, really but express the spiritual joy of the blest,<sup>21</sup> “yet by a certain redundance they shine also in the body.” And this refulgence of the resurrected body may be conceived as a distinct aureole.<sup>22</sup> Until the Judgment-Day however, this aureole of the glorified body must remain for the blest the one unfulfilled desire.<sup>23</sup>

In Dante’s heaven of the Sun, the twenty-four blessed spirits form of themselves two crowns,<sup>24</sup> signifying the *aurea* and aureole already theirs. But presently, as if in confirmation of the assurance by one of them, Solomon, that their “desire of their bodies dead” shall be fulfilled, a third crown forms “out-

<sup>20</sup> Ib. xlix, 5, 3, sol. 3, 1<sup>m</sup>. All in Dante’s heaven of the Sun are declared “victorious”—*Par.* x, 64.

<sup>21</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* III, xcvi, 2, c: “. . . *aurea* consistit in gaudio, quod habetur de Deo; *aureola* vero in gaudio, quod habetur de operum perfectione.”

<sup>22</sup> St. Thomas, IV *Sent.* xlix, 5, 1, c: “. . . sicut supra beatitudinem animae gloria corporis adjungitur, unde et ipsa gloria corporis interdum aureola nominatur.”

<sup>23</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxxvii, 4, 3<sup>m</sup>. Cf. *Par.* xxv, 91-96.

<sup>24</sup> *Par.* xii, 1 et seq.

side" the other two, but equal in radiance.<sup>25</sup> It is fitly "outside" <sup>26</sup> the other two, for they signify the joy in the soul, whereas it signifies the glory of the new body that reclothes the soul. The spirits cannot themselves form it, for they do not yet possess it. It is formed by "new subsistences," who are also called "the veritable sparkling of the Holy Spirit."<sup>27</sup> These subsistences must be angels. Them only the divine light irradiates without mediation, so making them its direct (*recta*), or "veritable sparkling."<sup>28</sup> They are the messengers of the Holy Spirit; and their business it will be on the Judgment-Day miraculously to collect from the grave dust for the remaking of the bodies of the blest.<sup>29</sup> Moreover their own reward of joy will be increased by such benefit to men.<sup>30</sup> And

<sup>25</sup> *Par.* xiv, 67: "di chiarezza pari." Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* III (*Suppl.*), xcvi, 1, c.

<sup>26</sup> "Di fuor"—*Par.* xiv, 75.

<sup>27</sup> *Ib.* 73-78.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Conv.* III, xiv, 35-37.

<sup>29</sup> St. Thomas, IV, *Sent.* xliii, 1, 2, sol. 3: ". . . in omnibus quae corporaliter a Deo fiunt, utitur Deus ministerio Angelorum. In resurrectione autem est aliquid ad transmutationem corporum pertinens, scilicet collectio cinerum, et eorum praeparatio ad reparationem humani corporis; unde quantum ad hoc in resurrectione utetur Deus ministerio Angelorum."

<sup>30</sup> *Ib.* xii, 2, 1, 2, c.

Dante also himself makes a more subtle association. As "angelic love" in Gabriel <sup>31</sup> announced the incarnation of Christ in the corruptible body, efficient cause of salvation, so now the third crown of angels announces symbolically the reincarnation of man in the incorruptible body, final cause—or ultimate reward—of salvation; and to point this implied association Dante is at pains to note likeness between the "modest voice" of Solomon promising the new incarnation of the blessed spirits, and the voice of "the angel to Mary." <sup>32</sup>

#### THE HEAVEN OF PRUDENCE

To merit reward of salvation man must make provision towards it, that is, towards union with God. But to make provision, he must have provision—that is, prevision or foreknowledge—of God; since he cannot make provision towards an end unless he knows what that end is. In the beginning man had adequate foreknowledge of God. Indeed, Adam in the state of innocence had more intimate knowledge of God than any later man on earth.<sup>33</sup> But by the blinding of

<sup>31</sup> *Par.* xxiii, 103.

<sup>32</sup> *Par.* xiv, 34-36.

<sup>33</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T. I.*, xciv, 1.



original sin he and his descendants lost sight of God, and by natural reason could not again find him out. So Virgil to Dante:

“Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione  
 Possa trascorrer la infinita via  
 Che tiene una sostanza in tre persone.  
 State contenti, umana gente, al *quia*;  
 Chè se potuto aveste veder tutto,  
 Mestier non era partorir Maria.”<sup>34</sup>

By the “parturition of Mary,” God revealed himself again to man. The Word that was with God, and was God, was spoken through Christ. Faith in Christ is grace to foreknow God. And foreknowledge of his perfection induces the love of him which is charity. Love is the desire to be united with the object loved, and since faith gives assurance of the possibility of union with God, there springs from faith and charity, hope.<sup>35</sup>

God's self-revelation in the Incarnation is the supreme executive act in time of divine Providence. By it saving grace, forfeited by Adam's lapse, was regiven to man. From it flowed the three theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity,—which move directly to

<sup>34</sup> *Purg.* iii, 34-39.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Purg.* xxix, 127-128. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xvii, 7-8.

the end of salvation, or union with God. By these theological virtues the moral virtues, reducible to four cardinal—prudence, fortitude, justice, temperance,—are directed to that end. Of these cardinal virtues, prudence is directive in respect to the things which make towards that end (*ea quae sunt ad finem*).<sup>36</sup> In other words, prudence, derived in name from providence,<sup>37</sup> determines the ways and means by which man's plan of living is conformed to the plan of Providence. And as thus illumining the way of right living, of rectitude, prudence fitly is associated with the Sun,

“pianeta

Che mena dritto altrui per ogni calle”<sup>38</sup>

to the Mount of Rectitude, *il diletto monte*.<sup>39</sup> Like the Sun, prudence is “*padre d'ogni mortal vita*,”<sup>40</sup> and—significantly in connection with the constellation of the *Carro*, or Wain, presently to be discussed—“*il carro della luce*.”<sup>41</sup> Again, the truly pru-

<sup>36</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlvii, 6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ib.* xlix, 6, 1<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> *Inf.* i, 17-19.

<sup>39</sup> *Ib.* 77.

<sup>40</sup> *Par.* xxii, 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Purg.* iv, 59.

dent man is God's most perfect instrument in the temporal execution of his divine plan, since the prudent man has most perfect provision of ways and means towards the appointed end.<sup>42</sup> Proportionally, therefore, in function the prudent man is most like God. And as God is the "Sun of the angels,"<sup>43</sup> so the prudent man may be regarded as the Sun of men. Again, as the Sun is

"Lo ministro maggior della natura  
Che del valor del ciel il mondo imprenta,  
E col suo lume il tempo ne misura,"<sup>44</sup>

so the greatest minister of human nature is the prudent man who imprints upon the world the worth of heaven, and with his light measures for men the proper disposition of their time.<sup>45</sup> As in a mirror the prudent man reflects God.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxxviii, 7, 1<sup>m</sup>: ". . . instrumentum non propter se quaeritur, sed propter finem, non tanto aliquid fit melius, quanto magis est instrumentum, sed quanto est magis fini proportionatum."

<sup>43</sup> *Par.* x, 53.

<sup>44</sup> *Par.* x, 27-29.

<sup>45</sup> This function is implied in the image of the clock-wheel (*orologio*) of *Par.* x, 139-148. See below, p. 69.

<sup>46</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxiii, 1, c: ". . . illustratio mentis propheticæ potest dici speculum aeternitatis, quasi repræsentans Dei præscientiam, qui in sua aeternitate omnia præsentia videt."

Fittingly, therefore, those in the heaven of Prudence are called "suns."<sup>47</sup>

Dante is justified, then, in associating the virtue of prudence with the heaven of the Sun. Prudence determines man's way; charity moves him on the way; grace makes his going in the way at all possible. So the factors of salvation are reducible to these three, —divine grace, charity, and prudence.<sup>48</sup>

Prudence looks not directly to the end, but to the things which make towards the end. So it moves to the end mediately and indirectly. Its line of approach is not rectilinear (*motus rectus*), but oblique (*motus obliquus*) or spiral. In this, again, prudence has analogy with the Sun, the beneficent influence of which depends, as Dante explains by way of introduction to the heaven of Prudence,<sup>49</sup> on

<sup>47</sup> *Par.* x, 76.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *De veritate*, XXVII, v, 5<sup>m</sup>: ". . . prudentia dicitur forma omnium virtutum moralium. Actus autem virtutis sic constitutus in medio, est quasi materialis respectu ordinis in finem ultimum, qui quidem ordo apponitur actui virtutis ex imperio caritatis; et sic caritas dicitur esse forma omnium aliarum virtutum. Uterius vero efficaciam merendi adhibet gratia; nullus enim operum nostrorum valor reputatur dignus aeternae gloriae, nisi praesupposita acceptione divina; et sic gratia dicitur esse forma et caritatis et aliarum virtutum."

<sup>49</sup> *Par.* x, 13-24, 27-33.

the obliqueness of the ecliptic, in which the Sun's actual path describes a spiral. Dante's own ascent to the Empyrean so describes a long spiral from the point of his entering Hell.<sup>50</sup> And in the heaven of the Sun itself he points the analogy. The Sun was ascending in its spirals, he says,—"*Ed io era con lui.*"<sup>51</sup> There are indeed moments when Dante's spiral course changes to vertically rectilinear, or to circular in the same plane. But these exceptions only reënforce the point. By Lucia he is carried in sleep straight up to Purgatory Gate.<sup>52</sup> By Beatrice he is virtually lifted up the Ladder in the heaven of the contemplatives.<sup>53</sup> But obviously, these straight upward ascents are by supernatural aid. Again, he circles with the heavenly spheres while in them, and finally around the luminous point which is God.<sup>54</sup> This circular

<sup>50</sup> To be exact, the line of his movement about the superimposed cones of Hell and Purgatory is helical. It should be observed that he does not ever change direction of approach. In other words, the axis of the whole spiral is rectilinear.

<sup>51</sup> *Par.* x, 28-34.

<sup>52</sup> *Purg.* ix, 52-57.

<sup>53</sup> *Par.* xxii, 100-105.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Par.* xviii, 61-62; xxxiii, 142-145.

motion symbolizes attainment.<sup>55</sup> The point is that man cannot know God directly, any more than he can look at the Sun directly; therefore he must by indirection find direction out. And the virtue which so does is prudence.

The most intimate reflection of God for mankind was in Christ, the Word incarnate. After Christ's Ascension, the Word was left with the Church, as recorded in the Scriptures and as interpreted and administered by Peter and his successors. Salvation lies in obedience to these authorities:

"Avete il vecchio e il nuovo Testamento,  
E il pastor della Chiesa che vi guida:  
Questo vi basti a vostro salvamento."<sup>56</sup>

God in his mercy, however, has given special grace to certain men further to advance the faith by preaching and example. So St. Thomas in his *Summa*, after defining virtues and vices affecting all men in common, discusses those affecting specifically these God-gifted ones.<sup>57</sup> His argument controls, I think, the *Paradise*.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxix, 1, 3<sup>m</sup>; clxxx, 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Par.* v, 76-78.

<sup>57</sup> II-II, clxxi et seq.

## PLAN OF THE PARADISE

Like the *Purgatory*, the *Paradise* is divided into three parts, so expressing the Trinity. The first three planetary heavens, though lighted by the Sun, are still within the shadow of the earth. The personages associated with them played their earthly parts under the shadow of some infirmity of will. Picarda's inconstancy was an act of imprudence, arguing imperfect provision—or prevision—of the right way.<sup>58</sup> In the last analysis, she showed herself weak of faith. Justinian did good works in hope of temporal glory, sinning in so far against the hope of eternal glory.<sup>59</sup> Again, true love, or charity, is the love of God. Cunizza mixed with charity sensual love, so showing defect of charity.

Thus the spirits of the three lowest heavens—Moon, Mercury, Venus—are imperfect in faith or in hope or in charity, the holy virtues which lead directly to salvation. Mercifully saved in spite of weakness, they constitute the proletariat of heaven, humble subjects in the kingdom of God. Manifestly,

<sup>58</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, liii, 5: “. . . dicitur aliquis esse inconstans, quod ratio deficit in praeciando ea, quae sunt consiliata, et iudicata.”

<sup>59</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, cxxxii, 1-2.

the vast majority of the human race, so far as it attains salvation at all, would be with them.

Balancing these three lowest heavens are the three highest—Starry, Crystalline, Empyrean,—associated respectively with the triumph of the whole congregation of the faithful, of the angels, and of the perfected providence of God in reuniting to himself errant man. This ultimate reunion, represented by Dante's rapture, is through charity; its consummation has been the hope of the angels, primary agents thereof; and the way and means of consummation were found through the faith of which the Church Militant is repository. Thus the last division of the *Paradise* also reflects the three holy virtues, but in their perfection.

Between are the four planetary heavens beyond the shadow of the earth,—Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. Physically, the Sun lights them all. Morally, since they signify perfection of the four cardinal virtues, of these four prudence is light-giver to the rest. All four together represent all there is on earth of guidance of man by man; and by prudence all guidance is guided. For prudence in the large sense applies to all human cognition, specula-



tive as well as practical.<sup>60</sup> Hence the spirits of the Sun should represent severally prudence in its various aspects or categories.<sup>61</sup>

#### THE PROPHETS OF THE SUN

Prudence guides—that is, counsels, judges, commands—in those things which make for the end, cognition of God.<sup>62</sup> Considered in its entirety the operation of prudence exceeds man's natural faculty. For to guide to an end, one must know the end; and knowledge of the end, which is God, is not in human power as such. So God has graciously given certain men special insights, or illuminations, above the normal. This "grace freely given" (*gratia gratis data*) need not be possessed by them habitually,<sup>63</sup> and is independent of their merit.<sup>64</sup> Those who receive it may even lack grace to be saved themselves (*gratia gratum faciens*). But in so far as the foresight, or far-sight, of prudence is so divinely illumined, it

<sup>60</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlvi, 2, 2<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *ib.* clxxi, 1, 4<sup>m</sup>: ". . . Dominus omnia quae sunt necessaria ad instructionem fidelis populi, revelat Prophetis; non tamen omnia omnibus, sed quaedam uni, quaedam alii."

<sup>62</sup> *Ib.* xlvi, 8.

<sup>63</sup> *Ib.* clxxi, 2, c.

<sup>64</sup> *Ib.* clxxii, 3, c.

becomes prophecy. Indeed, according to thirteenth century etymology, prudence and prophecy mean the same thing, to wit, *proculvidens*, farseeing.<sup>65</sup> And in fact, both kinds of farseeing are really foreseeing, the one of future events in time, the other of the future event beyond time, or beatitude.

The gift of prophecy expresses itself in some particular act, or acts, of revelation. The prophet is not always inspired. Nathan, remarks St. Thomas, advised David to build the temple at once; later forbade him. Only in the prohibition did the Holy Spirit speak through him.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, wisdom and knowledge may also be habitually possessed as gifts of the Holy Spirit, and in such degree that all, or most, of the revelations of their possessor have the quality of true prophecy.<sup>67</sup> Preëminently, this "infused" wisdom as to things divine and "infused" knowledge as to things human was given to Solomon; who therefore, for such divine wisdom is classed by St. Thomas with the apostles,<sup>68</sup> and by such knowledge of the world and of

<sup>65</sup> Ib. xlvii, I, c; clxxi, I, c.

<sup>66</sup> *Quol.* XII, xxvi, I<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, li, 4, c.

<sup>68</sup> II-II, clxxiii, 2, c.

men as the supreme judge.<sup>69</sup> To him also was given the grace of discourse (*gratia sermonis*), so that he wrote as if by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit,<sup>70</sup> and in his three books revealed truth to all men according to their capacity: in *Proverbs*, by parables and also openly to the young and the unlearned, incipient in wisdom; in *Ecclesiastes*, openly but intimately (*proprie*) to the proficient; in the *Song of Songs*, parabolically and secretly to the perfect.<sup>71</sup> Finally, Solomon was divinely anointed king, that he might exemplify perfect rule of a multitude, which is the highest active function of prudence.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, his governance was informed by worship of God, for which grace must be given.<sup>73</sup> Hence in him supremely the virtue of prudence was raised to the gift of prophecy.

These various claims of Solomon to pru-

<sup>69</sup> *De veritate*, xii, 12, c: ". . . inquantum de moribus hominum et naturis rerum, quae naturaliter accipimus, divino instinctu ceteris certius judicavit."

<sup>70</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxiv, 2, 3.

<sup>71</sup> St. Bonaventure, *In Eccles.*, Proem., ad fin.

<sup>72</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, I, I, c: ". . . ideo regi, ad quem pertinet regere civitatem, vel regnum, prudentia competit secundum specialem, et perfectissimam suam rationem."

<sup>73</sup> *Ib.* clxxii, I, 4<sup>m</sup>: ". . . in ordine ad cultum divinum, ad quem natura non sufficit, sed requiritur gratia."

dential and prophetic preëminence are carefully, if briefly, indicated by Dante. Moved by charity to prophesy charity, Solomon wrote the *Song of Songs*. And this he wrote as Jedidiah, or *Dilectus*, the Beloved.<sup>74</sup> So, for this spirit of charity, St. Thomas tells Dante that Solomon,

“La quinta luce, ch'è tra noi più bella,  
Spira di tale amor che tutto il mondo  
Laggiù ne gola di saper novella.”<sup>75</sup>

St. Thomas also declares him supreme by wisdom “infused” (*messo*),<sup>76</sup> and on the practical side, in “kingly prudence,” “without second,” even if Christ be reckoned.<sup>77</sup> Thus his light among the illumined prophets of the Sun is not only “fairest” in charity, but also divinest, *più dia*, in wisdom.<sup>78</sup>

Yet to man may be given—at least in moments—a higher insight into things divine and above sense than even Solomon had. This is cognition, immediate and direct, of truth in God. Such cognition is, indeed, an habitual possession (*habitus*) only of the blest,

<sup>74</sup> St. Thomas, *In Cantic. Canticor.*, Proem., med°.

<sup>75</sup> *Par.* x, 109–111.

<sup>76</sup> *Ib.* 112–114.

<sup>77</sup> *Par.* xiii, 34–111.

<sup>78</sup> *Par.* xiv, 34.

but by special grace it may be, and has been, given to certain mortals momentarily. So Moses saw God personally in a sensible form, and St. Paul saw him even more perfectly in his suprasensible essence. Theirs was the highest reach of prophetic inspiration.<sup>79</sup> And Dante himself, whether in poetic feigning or by serious claim, received in rapture and by "abundant grace" immediate knowledge of all natural truth in its unity,<sup>80</sup> and later of God's essence itself.<sup>81</sup> Moreover he received the prophet's gift to express somewhat of his vision for the edification of others.<sup>82</sup>

Two spirits of the Sun are credited with some participation in this miraculously perfect insight: Dionysius,

"Che giuso in carne più addentro vide  
L'angelica natura e il ministero,"<sup>83</sup>

and Richard of St. Victor,

"Che a considerar fu più che viro."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxiv, 3, c; clxxv, 3, 1<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 82-105.

<sup>81</sup> *Ib.* 139-141. Cf. *Par.* i, 4-9; also Epistle to Can Grande, the whole argument of which focusses to this claim.

<sup>82</sup> *Ib.* 10-27.

<sup>83</sup> *Par.* x, 116-117.

<sup>84</sup> *Par.* x, 131-132. Cf. *Ep.* x, 28.

Also, according to St. Bonaventure, Dionysius and Richard preëminently taught the anagogical sense of Scripture, which teaches how is to be attained union with God. Scripture is man's chief illumination, he says, "because it leads to higher things, making manifest those which are above reason. Besides the literal, there is a threefold spiritual sense of Scripture: (1) allegorical, teaching what is to be believed concerning divinity and humanity; (2) moral, teaching how to live; (3) anagogical, teaching what is union with God. . . . The first concerns faith; the second morals; the third, the end of both. Study of the first is for doctors; of the second for preachers; of the third for contemplatives. Augustine preëminently taught the first; Gregory the second; Dionysius the third. Anselm follows Augustine; Bernard, Gregory; Richard, Dionysius. Anselm surpasses in reasoning; Bernard in preaching; Richard in contemplation. Hugh of St. Victor follows all three,—Augustine, Gregory, and Dionysius." <sup>85</sup>

St. Bonaventure speaks categorically, as if no justification were needed. Such classifications were current. "*Unicuique autem datur*

<sup>85</sup> *Opusc. de reductione artium ad theologiam*, me°.

*manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem . . . ad aedificationem Ecclesiae.*" <sup>86</sup> St. Paul's dictum gave warrant for assigning to each light of the Church a special virtue, a specific function. So in listing Anselm and Hugh, for instance, among the great prophesiers of the faith, Dante gave no explanation of their respective virtues, because none was needed by the informed,—and he expected only such to follow him.<sup>87</sup> St. Anselm's famous *Cur Deus Homo* exactly fits the category of allegorical interpretation of Scripture; for the subject of that is, as St. Bonaventure says, "the eternal generation and incarnation of Christ."<sup>88</sup> Again, Hugh of St. Victor, adept in three senses of Scripture, may well fill the bracket left vacant by Dante's use of St. Bernard elsewhere in the *Comedy*. His most authoritative work on the sacraments—*De sacramentis Christianae fidei*—interpreted the moral sense of Scripture, that is, the rule of right living, of which the sacraments are the sign and token.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *I Cor.* xii, 7; xiv, 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Par.* ii, 1 et seq.

<sup>88</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>89</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* III, lxv, 1, c: ". . . sacramenta Ecclesiae ordinantur ad duo; scilicet ad perficiendum hominem in his quae pertinent ad cultum Dei secundum religionem christianae vitae, et etiam in remedium contra defectum peccati."

Incidentally, he was St. Bernard's intimate friend.

We have seen that Solomon fitly represented the supreme practical function of prudence, "*regal prudenza*," or — in St. Thomas's phrase — "*prudencia regnativa*."<sup>90</sup> But as there should be the right ruler of men in temporal affairs, so should there be in spiritual affairs. Some prophet should express the right Prelate, prince of the Church. Dante's choice, I think, is clearly implied.

"Io son la vita di Bonaventura  
Da Bagnoregio, che nei grandi offici  
Sempre posposi la sinistra cura."<sup>91</sup>

St. Bonaventure had been general of the Franciscan Order, bishop, and cardinal. The "lefthand care" is temporal interests, whether his own or of the Church. Now Dante's fundamental conviction, ever and everywhere urged, was that the Church should discard temporal interest, temporal power, that baleful "second load" now crushing her into the mud.<sup>92</sup> St. Bonaventure, spiritually

<sup>90</sup> *S. T.* II-II, xlviii, c.

<sup>91</sup> *Par.* xii, 127-129.

<sup>92</sup> *Purg.* xvi, 127-129. Cf. *Inf.* xix, 115-117; *Purg.* xxxii, 124-160; vi, 91-96; *De Mon.* passim.



mind, world-forgetting, corrected by example and teaching the fatal error of ambitious prelates. His was the right conception of the elder of the two guides of mankind,—the supreme Pontiff, “who according to things revealed should lead the human race to eternal life.”<sup>93</sup>

*Prudentia regnativa* applies also to rule within the Church. Three things, says St. Thomas, are required of a prelate: to govern his flock, to suffer for it, to cast out black sheep.<sup>94</sup> With one other spirit Dante names his ecclesiastical office, namely, “*il metropolitano Crisostomo*.”<sup>95</sup> St. John Chrysostom, Metropolitan of Constantinople, was sainted for having so well fulfilled these requirements.<sup>96</sup> Also, for his prophetic gift of eloquence (*gratia sermonis*) he was called Chrysostom, “golden-mouth.”

Immediately subordinate and auxiliary to *prudentia regnativa* is *prudentia politica*, of which the principal part is *legispositiva*, the formulating and codifying of law. Gratian so well accomplished this task for Canon, or

<sup>93</sup> *De Mon.* III, xvi, 75-79.

<sup>94</sup> *In Joan.* x, 3.

<sup>95</sup> *Par.* xii, 136-137.

<sup>96</sup> *Brev. Roman. ad 27 Jan.*; also *Aurea Legenda*, cap. xxxiv.

ecclesiastical, law, that his *Decretum* pleased Heaven <sup>97</sup>—and Dante. For it effectively demarcated the jurisdictions of Church and State, and so served the same reform as St. Bonaventure.

The Church Militant is, as the term implies, not only a congregation of the faithful, but also an army against the unfaithful, the infidel.<sup>98</sup> Regulative of a multitude mobilized "for combat" is *prudentia militaris*. It is prudence directive not of the whole of life, but to a certain need.<sup>99</sup> Physical warfare against the enemies of the Cross Dante represents in Mars, the heaven of Fortitude. But intellectual warfare—defence of the faith—belongs to the prophets. Supreme defender of the faith was St. Dominic,

"l'amoroso drudo  
Della fede cristiana, il santo atleta  
Benigno ai suoi, ed ai nemici crudo," <sup>100</sup>

and so conceived as the left-wheel of the war-chariot (*biga*),

"In che la santa Chiesa si difese  
E vinse in campo la sua civil briga." <sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *Par.* x, 103–105.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Par.* xii, 37: "l'esercito di Cristo."

<sup>99</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II–II, xlviii, c.

<sup>100</sup> *Par.* xii, 55–57.

<sup>101</sup> *Ib.* 107–108.

His manifest successor is the Dominican St. Thomas Aquinas, author of the *Summa catholica contra gentiles*.<sup>102</sup>

St. Thomas is a defender of the Christian faith. Another, Paulus Orosius, defended Christianity as an institution. His *Historiarum adversus paganos libri vii* supplemented St. Augustine's *De civitate Dei* in rebutting pagan accusations that the establishment of the Christian state caused the fall of the Roman state.

Prudence has jurisdiction not only over all men collectively, but also over organized groups such as households and families, and over individuals. Prudence directing households and families is called *prudentia oeconomica*; prudence directing individuals, *prudentia monastica*.<sup>103</sup> Religious orders are conceived as families.<sup>104</sup> Rabanus Maurus was for twenty years, 822 to 842, abbot of the

<sup>102</sup> In Dante's time, St. Thomas appears to have been chiefly famous as the author of this work. It is the only work of his Dante ever mentions by title. As to positive doctrine, St. Thomas humbly calls himself the pupil of Albertus—*Par.* x, 98. In any case, Dante uses historical personages to make his points. The *Paradise* is not a literary critique.

<sup>103</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlvihi, c.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. *Par.* xi, 86; xii, 115.

great Benedictine monastery at Fulda, made its school celebrated throughout Europe, and wrote the *De institutione clericum*—reputed his chief work. He so satisfactorily represents *prudencia oeconomica*.

*Prudentia monastica* is directive of the private individual, whether layman or cleric. For the laity, both for precept in the *De consolatione*, and for example of the virtue of fortitude, for which he was canonized as martyr, Dante could name no one more representative than Boethius, St. Severinus,

"L'anima santa che il mondo fallace  
Fa manifesto a chi di lei ben ode. . .  
                                ed essa da martiro  
E da esilio venne a questa pace." 105

For *prudentialia monastica* in the narrower and derived sense—that is, as applying to individuals, not in authority, in the monastic orders,—he cites two Franciscan friars,—Illuminato and Augustino,

"Che fur dei primi scalzi poverelli  
Che nel capestro a Dio si fero amici." 106

The primary function of prudence is counsel. Christ is the supreme counsellor, and his

<sup>105</sup> *Par.* x, 125-126, 128-129.

<sup>116</sup> *Par.* xii, 131-132.

counsels are reducible to three,—poverty, chastity, obedience.<sup>107</sup> Self-dedication after these counsels to imitation of Christ is the perfection of the religious life. And this rule of life was most perfectly ordered and lived by St. Francis,—a second Sun after Christ, illumining and warming mankind.<sup>108</sup> Illuminato and Augustino, who followed him immediately, having shared his intimacy, would have therefore an apostolic sanction like that of the apostles themselves, who had been with Christ. They also represent two grades of the religious life. “*Per la sete del martiro*,” Illuminato accompanied St. Francis into Egypt to preach Christ to the Sultan.<sup>109</sup> Apostle, preacher, willing martyr, Illuminato exemplifies the highest grade of religious vocation and prudent counsel. Augustino, on the other hand, was the gardener of the convent. But though his service was humble, his

<sup>107</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, cviii, 4.

<sup>108</sup> *Par.* xi, 49-54. St. Bonaventure, in *Prol.*, *Legenda S. Francisci*, uses the same figure.

<sup>109</sup> *Par.* xi, 100. Cf. St. Bonaventure, *Leg. S. Francis.*, ix: “Assumpto igitur socio fratre, Illuminato nomine, viro utique luminis, et virtutis, cum iter coepisset, obvias habuit oviculas duas, quibus visis exhilaratus vir sanctus, dixit ad socium: Confide, frater, in Domino, nam in nobis evangelicum illud impletur: *Ecce ego mitto vos sicut oves in medio luporum.*”

end was exaltedly edifying. In his last illness, he had lost the power of speech; when suddenly he cried out: "Wait, my father, wait! I am coming with you." Asked by those about him what he meant, he replied: "Do you not see our father Francis walking in heaven?" And when he had so spoken, dying, he rejoined the master.<sup>110</sup> But although thus at the end prophetically illumined, he fulfilled in manual labor the lowest calling of the religious life.<sup>111</sup>

Prudence has three eyes.<sup>112</sup> The prudent man has "right knowledge of past things, and right understanding of present things, and right provision of future things."<sup>113</sup> Of these parts, or bases, of prudence, the principal is foresight; "inasmuch from past things remembered, and present things understood, we gather how to provide for things future."<sup>114</sup> It is "useful" (*ad utilitatem*), therefore, that grace be given to interpret the revelations of others in the past.<sup>115</sup> Thus among the

<sup>110</sup> *Leg. Aurea*, cxlvii.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxxvii, 3; clxxxviii, 6.

<sup>112</sup> *Purg.* xxix, 132.

<sup>113</sup> *Conv.* IV, xxvii, 42-46. Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* III, xi, I, 3<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>114</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, xxii, 1, c.

<sup>115</sup> *Ib.* II-II, clxxiii, 2, c.

prophets of the Sun there are three whose special mission seems to have been such: Pietro Mangiadore, or Petrus Comestor, whose *Historia Scholastica* is an interpretative account of the Church as a repository of revelations from the beginning of the world down to the times of the apostles; Bede, whose famous *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* interprets the Apostolic Church and the early propagation of the faith in the far parts of the world;<sup>116</sup> and Peter Lombard, whose *Sententiarum libri quatuor* is an interpretative commentary on the sentences, or conclusions, of the Church Fathers. In the thirteenth century, Peter Lombard was by no means regarded as a mere compiler. St. Bonaventure, for instance, indignantly rejects such an estimate. Distinguishing between scribe, compiler, commentator, and author, he asserts Peter's title to be rightly author, "since he posits his own conclusions, and confirms them by the conclusions of the Fathers. . . . And because there are therein (in his book) many sayings of others, does not lessen the authority of the Master, but rather attests

<sup>116</sup> Dante gives such a prophetically interpretative history in outline of the Roman Empire in *Par.* vi.

his authority and humility."<sup>117</sup> Dante also emphasizes the humility of Peter,

"che con la poverella  
Offerse a Santa Chiesa suo tesoro."<sup>118</sup>

In respect to future things, inspired prudence, or prophecy, has a threefold degree: (1) when these are perceived or known by some, but not all; (2) when they are beyond human understanding, yet not in themselves unknowable—such as the mystery of the Trinity; (3) when they are in themselves—except for God—unknowable—such as future contingencies.<sup>119</sup> The revelations of the prophets of the Sun hitherto considered are of the first two classes; but Dante offers two of the third class. These are "Natan profeta,"<sup>120</sup> and

"Il calabrese abbate Gioacchino,  
Di spirito profetico dotato."<sup>121</sup>

Two prophecies are recorded of Nathan,—one as to the building of the temple,<sup>122</sup> the other as to David's guilty love of Bathsheba.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>117</sup> *I Sent.*, Proem., fin.

<sup>118</sup> *Par.* x, 107-108.

<sup>119</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxi, 3, c.

<sup>120</sup> *Par.* xii, 136.

<sup>121</sup> *Ib.* 140-141.

<sup>122</sup> *II Sam.* vii.

<sup>123</sup> *Ib.* xii.



Both foretold the consequences of disobedience. The latter illustrates the transiency of the prophet's inspiration. Nathan first advised David to build the temple, then forbade him on pain of God's displeasure. The first time he spoke for himself, the second time inspired by God.<sup>124</sup> The virtue of prudence may be habitual and immanent, but is of itself fallible. Prudence raised by grace to the infallibility of prophecy is a transient power.<sup>125</sup>

The object of prophecy is "that which exists in the divine cognition above the human faculty." A future event exists in the divine cognition in two ways: (1) as in its cause, (2) as in God's intention (*ut fiendum ab ipso*). Prophecy as to the former is of "commination;" prophecy as to the latter is of "predestination."<sup>126</sup> Nathan, predicting the consequences of David's possible disobedience, illustrates comminatory prophecy. Joachim's

<sup>124</sup> St. Thomas, *Quodlibet* XII, xxvi, 1<sup>m</sup>: "Aliquando etiam aliqua dicunt a se ipsis; sicut patet de Nathan, qui consuluit David quod aedificaret templum, postea autem a Domino reprehensus et quasi retractus prohibuit hoc ipsi David ex parte Dei."

<sup>125</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxi, 2, c.

<sup>126</sup> *Ib.* clxxiv, 1, e. Since God has prescience of the free acts of mankind, prophecy as to them may be formally included under predestination.

at least most noted prophecy was predestinative. In his *Expositio in Apocalypsin*, he predicted a third dispensation, revealed in the *Apocalypse*, to follow those of the Old and New Testaments.<sup>127</sup> As the Father revealed the old law; the Son the new law; so the Holy Spirit should reveal its law, which would be above need of any disciplinary institution whatever. St. Thomas indeed had condemned this teaching.<sup>128</sup> Dante would also have rejected the anarchistic corollary, but was at least sympathetic to the promise of a new and better era to come. He himself predicted a divinely ordained leader, the *Veltro*<sup>129</sup> or *DXV*,<sup>130</sup> who should drive off the Wolf of greed, and so recall the Church to its proper spiritual mission. Also, in declaring Francis and Dominic princes and captains of the Church, the two wheels of its chariot,<sup>131</sup> he conforms to Joachim's theory of the rightful primacy in this mission of contemplatives and monks.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>127</sup> In another of his writings, he predicted the line of future popes.

<sup>128</sup> *S. T.* I-II, cvi, 4, 2<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>129</sup> *Inf.* i, 101-111.

<sup>130</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii, 43.

<sup>131</sup> *Par.* xii, 31-45, 106-108.

<sup>132</sup> Also, cf. below, pp. 69 et seq.

The third provision of prudence—in relation to past, present, and future—is of present things. Of these also there must needs be prophesying.<sup>133</sup> Present things are existing facts of nature and human nature. All prophecy is indeed in a sense of the present, in that it regulates present thinking or acting by things beyond, either in time or existence. But the regulative principle of the inspired interpreters so far adduced has been the Word revealed in Scripture.<sup>134</sup> But God also is revealed in the works of creation, that is, in corporeal things. These are the subject matter of Physics, to which all demonstrative sciences are subordinate.<sup>135</sup> Physics in turn is subordinated to Metaphysics, in that the latter considers Being in itself, the former Being as sensibly known.<sup>136</sup> Supreme master of the double science of Being, as interpreted

<sup>133</sup> Cf. St. Gregory: "Aliquando spiritus prophetiae praesenti tangit animum prophetantis, et ex futuro nequaquam tangit; aliquando autem ex praesenti non tangit, et ex futuro tangit." Quoted by St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxi, 4, b.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, lxxix, 9, c.

<sup>135</sup> Ib. II-II, xlvihi, c.

<sup>136</sup> St. Thomas, *De nat. generis*, Opusc. XLII, vi, prin<sup>o</sup>: ". . . naturalis scientia, quae applicat naturam entis ad naturam sensibilem, est sub Metaphysica, quae considerat de ente absolute."

by reason, was Aristotle, "*il maestro di lor che sanno*."<sup>137</sup> It had been the mission of Albertus Magnus, *doctor universalis*, to interpret Aristotle's Physics and Metaphysics, his doctrine of Being, in the light, supernaturally given, of true Being, which is God. St. Thomas therefore, humbly presents Albertus as his master.<sup>138</sup> Albertus fitly represents that special grace which makes possible interpretation "according to divine truth of those things which man apprehends in the course of nature."<sup>139</sup>

The most perfect instrument of science is the demonstrative syllogism, "which from necessary premises draws necessary conclusions,"<sup>140</sup> that is, certain knowledge. But we must often reason from probable premises to conclusions short of certain, or *opinion*, technically defined as "an act of the intellect which

<sup>137</sup> *Inf.* iv, 131.

<sup>138</sup> *Par.* x, 97-99.

<sup>139</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxiii, 2, c: "lumen autem intelligibile quandoque quidem imprimitur menti humani divinitus . . . ad dijudicandum secundum divinam veritatem ea, quae cursu naturali homo apprehendit." This dictum applies exactly to Dante's illumination in *Par.* xxxiii, 85-91, by which the scattered leaves of Nature's book are gathered for him legibly together.

<sup>140</sup> St. Thomas, *I Anal.* I.

leans to one side of a contradiction, whilst in fear of the other.”<sup>141</sup> Instrument of this mode of procedure is the dialectic syllogism. A third mode from various conjectures induces *suspicion*, that is, an act of the intellect which “not altogether leans to one side of a contradiction, but leans rather to one side than to the other.”<sup>142</sup> This is the mode of persuasion, and appertains to Rhetoric, as the first two modes to Logic. All three modes are essential to the operation of prudence and prophecy as influencing others. The business of the prophet is threefold: (1) to instruct, (2) to induce conviction, and (3) to effect loving obedience. And so to make the act of prophecy effective, the Holy Spirit confers the grace of discourse.<sup>143</sup>

The Holy Spirit may possess the prophet absolutely,—as when David declared that “The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.”<sup>144</sup> But the grace of discourse may be given in any less degree; in which case the prophet, to declare his message efficaciously, must be trained in the arts

<sup>141</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, lxxix, 9, 4<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>142</sup> *Ib.* xlvihi, c.

<sup>143</sup> *Ib.* clxxvii, 1, c.

<sup>144</sup> *II Sam.* xxiii, 2; cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* clxxiii, 4, c.

of discourse, Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. Thus Dante, while asserting himself to be the mere "scribe" of the Holy Spirit,<sup>145</sup> yet attributes his "fair style" to Virgil's guidance.<sup>146</sup>

As representative of the "first art," Grammar, Dante explicitly names

"quel Donato  
Ch'alla prim'arte degnò por la mano."<sup>147</sup>

Donatus so humbled his genius to profit others. Imputing the beneficent motive to the working within him of the Holy Spirit, St. Thomas would admit him a prophet in a qualified sense.<sup>148</sup>

To understand any discourse we must understand the terms, or names, used.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>145</sup> *Par.* x, 27. Cf. St. Bonaventure, *I Sent.*, Prol., conclus.: "Aliquis enim scribit alienam materiam nihil addendo, vel mutando; et iste mere dicitur scriptor." Cf. *Purg.* xxiv, 52-54.

<sup>146</sup> *Inf.* i, 85-87.

<sup>147</sup> *Par.* xii, 137-138.

<sup>148</sup> "Propheta secundum quid. Cf. *S. T.* II-II, clxxiv, 3, c: ". . . cum aliquis ex interiori lumine illustratur ad cognoscendum aliqua, quae tamen non excedunt limites naturalis cognitionis." Grammar, of course, does not exceed the limits of human cognition.

<sup>149</sup> St. Thomas, *De usuris*, I, prin<sup>o</sup>: "Cum enim nomina sint signa rerum, et ipsas res nobiscum ferre non possimus in disceptatione veritatis ipsarum; ideo ipsis nominibus

To this end is dedicated that branch of Grammar which is called Etymology. And Isidore is its prophet. His *Origines, seu Etymologiae* passed as an encyclopedia of universal knowledge, yet proceeds chiefly by etymological definitions.<sup>150</sup> Possibly, also, Dante introduced St. Isidore as representing one function of the prophet's "gift of tongues." The mind may be illumined, St. Thomas says, "to the end of understanding, and expounding, whatever may be obscure in discourses, whether on account of the difficulty of the things signified, or also on account of unknown words introduced," etc.<sup>151</sup>

As auxiliary to prophetic discourse, Logic must be conceived on its formal side, as the art or science of verbal reasoning (*scientia sermocinalis*), rather than of mental reasoning (*scientia rationalis*). As representative of the

pro rebus utentes, necesse habemus scire quid ipsa nomina significant." And St. Thomas proceeds to explain the term "usura" etymologically.

<sup>150</sup> Occasionally, indeed, the limitation of etymological definition was recognized, as for instance by St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xcii, 1, 2<sup>m</sup>. Medieval writers, however, including Dante, gave to it an importance at times mystical, —especially when applied to proper names. The practice is illustrated frequently in this essay.

<sup>151</sup> *S. T.* II-II, clxxvi, 2, 4<sup>m</sup>.

art of Logic in general Dante presents Peter of Spain,—

“Pietro Ispano,  
Lo qual giù luce in dodici libelli,”<sup>152</sup>

that is, the twelve parts of the *Summulae Logicales*, a manual authoritative in Dante's time.

Of Logic as regulative of reasoned discourse, or argumentation, designed to force conviction, or to win assent, the instrument is the syllogism, demonstrative or dialectic. The former, which Aristotle treats in his *Posterior Analytics*, is in effect represented by Albertus Magnus, master of the *demonstrative* sciences. The dialectic syllogism leads, as already stated, to probable conclusions, or opinions. “And because in these deception lies, sophistical arguments, or topics, are added,<sup>153</sup> that men may know how to resolve them.”<sup>154</sup> Fallacy is to sound argument as hypocrisy to virtue, being error under the mask of truth. The human mind readily accepts the apparent truth for the real, and

<sup>152</sup> *Par.* xii, 134-135.

<sup>153</sup> According to the ordering of the *Organon*, by Aristotle.

<sup>154</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Illuminationes Eccles.* iv.



therefore needs to be protected from its own sophistry as well as from that of others.

“O insensata cura dei mortali,  
Quanto son difettivi sillogismi  
Quei che ti fanno in basso batter l'ali!”<sup>155</sup>

Therefore, says Aristotle, beginning his essay on fallacies, the *Sophistical Elenchi*, we must learn how to recognize and to resolve sophistical syllogisms, both verbal and substantial. Forewarned is forearmed.

Now exactly this preventive medicine for the mind was offered by Sigier of Brabant,

“Che, leggendo nel Vico degli Strame,  
Sillogizzò invidiosi veri.”<sup>156</sup>

One of the most celebrated works of this dialectician was the *Impossibilia*, a collection of six paradoxical conclusions, first syllogistically demonstrated as true, and then shown to be exactly counter to the true. Incidentally, the fallacies involved are exposed. The little work is a model of clarity and brevity, and would be of disciplinary value to-day.<sup>157</sup> The six sophistical conclusions are: (1) God

<sup>155</sup> *Par.* xi, 1-3.

<sup>156</sup> *Par.* x, 137-138.

<sup>157</sup> Reprint in Pierre Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant et l'Averroïsme Latin au XIII<sup>me</sup> Siècle*, Louvain, 1911.

does not exist; (2) All things that appear to us are simulacra and as dreams, so that we cannot be certain of the existence of anything; (3) The Trojan War is going on at this very moment; (4) A heavy object, even if not prevented, will not fall; (5) Among human acts there is no evil act, which ought to be prohibited or punished as malicious; (6) Anything may at the same time be and not be, and contradictories are both of them true reciprocally and of the same thing. Of these paradoxes Mandonnet remarks: "*Le sujet de chaque sophisme révèle au premier abord que nous sommes en présence de simples exercices scolaires.*"<sup>158</sup> The remark is perhaps just, only we should remember that they are the "exercises" of a master, and at a time when syllogistic demonstration was the chief instrument of scientific procedure. Of course, Sigier did not expect his hearers to accept his fantastic conclusions as really proved. The manifest point would be to show up the tricks of the sophist. In the work as printed, the solutions are given; so that it is virtually a little textbook on fallacies, and a useful supplement to Aristotle's treatise, which lacks illustrative examples.

<sup>158</sup> Op. cit. I, p. 126.

The caption of the *Impossibilia* runs: "To the learned members of the University of Paris assembled a certain sophist undertook to prove and defend a number of impossible (theses)." <sup>159</sup> This declaration conforms as to locality to Dante's statement that Sigier,

"leggendo nel Vico degli Strame,  
Sillogizzò invidiosi veri." <sup>160</sup>

For the Vico degli Strame, or rue du Fouarre, ran by the Sorbonne. The difficulty has been to interpret the term "*invidiosi veri*."

The natural meaning of the term would be "invidious truths." It happens also that Sigier actually argued as truths doctrines that the Church had officially declared invidious, and so condemned as heretical. <sup>161</sup> Dante's characterization, in its natural intention, is therefore exact and just. There is no reason whatever for doubting that he meant it so.

The obvious difficulty is how and why he should have not only admitted a condemned heretic into Paradise, but even have exalted

<sup>159</sup> "Convocatis sapientibus studii Parisiensis proposuit sophista quidam impossibilia multa probare et defendere."

<sup>160</sup> *Par.* x, 137-138.

<sup>161</sup> Dissemination of false doctrine is an act of envy, in that it breaks the unity of the Church. Cf. St. Bonaventure, after St. Augustine, *In Joan.* vii, circa fin.

him among the divinely illumined and illumining prophets of the Sun. To pretend that Dante so glorified Sigier in sheer ignorance is a libel on "*il gran teologo*." One of Sigier's severest critics was Thomas Aquinas, who had publicly attacked him.<sup>162</sup> Even if Dante did not know this, even if—incredibly—he had not heard of Sigier's formal condemnation—made in 1277, in Dante's own boyhood—he could hardly have read Sigier's writings without at least detecting their antagonism to his own doctrines. That he did not read Sigier's writings, but deliberately honored as one of the twenty-four great teachers and light-givers of Christendom a contemporary known only by hearsay, and mistakenly at that,—well such assumption is rather an act of presumption which should bar him who makes it from Purgatory

"Per ogni tempo ch'egli è stato, trenta,  
In sua presunzion."

To be saved, Sigier must have recanted his errors. Dante may have had reason to suppose that he did; or he may have assumed it, exactly as in the case of the contumacious

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Mandonnet, *op. cit.* I, iv.

Manfred.<sup>163</sup> Certainly, befitting a penitent is the description of Sigier as

“uno spirto che, in pensieri  
Gravi, a morir gli parve venir tardo.”<sup>164</sup>

And Dante needed Sigier in heaven to represent that exposure of fallacious reasoning which, as Aristotle had insisted in the *Sophistical Elenchi*, is so manifestly a requirement of intellectual prudence. That Sigier in his own theological reasoning had himself been guilty of sophistries only made his exposure of sophistries in the *Impossibilia* the more edifying. Dante could say to him: “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee.”<sup>165</sup> For, as already said,<sup>166</sup> grace may be given for true prophesying in some things to men false and even damnable in others.

The *Impossibilia* is not only a work of high and useful inspiration; it also offers a secondary meaning for the term *invidiosi veri* that exactly fits the case.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>163</sup> *Purg.* iii.

<sup>164</sup> *Par.* x, 134-135.

<sup>165</sup> *Luke*, xix, 22.

<sup>166</sup> p. 25.

<sup>167</sup> Use of double-meaning terms was habitual with medieval theologians, by conviction esoteric in their teaching. Dante abundantly illustrates the practice.

The very danger of the sophistical syllogism, said Aristotle, is that it assumes the mask of the demonstrative syllogism, and so appears to draw a necessary conclusion from necessary premises. And such a demonstrated conclusion is, for the mind that sees no defect in the syllogism, a truth. Apart from immediate experience or dogmatic authority, there is no other criterion of truth. So each one of the *impossibilia* first "syllogizes" with apparent necessity a conclusion, or truth; then, correcting the latent ambiguity or irrelevancy in the premises, syllogizes another conclusion, or truth, contradictory of the first. But Sigier reserves to the last the crowning paradox that two contradictories may be at the same time both true.<sup>168</sup> Now two contradictory truths, whether accepted by the mind in sequence (as in the first five *impossibilia*) or at the same time (by apparent demonstration of their possible coexistence in the sixth), would be manifestly *invidiosi veri*,—that is, truths invidious or hostile to each other. For if one stands, the other falls:

"Ogni contradizzion è falsa e vera."<sup>169</sup>

<sup>168</sup> Mandonnet, op. cit. II, p. 91: "Quare contradictoria simul vera."

<sup>169</sup> *Par.* vi, 21.

Sigier's positive and specific service, then, was to correct the hasty judgment that jumps to false or faulty conclusions, or mistakes for demonstrated truths smooth and plausible fallacies. In fact, he taught the very lesson which Thomas Aquinas drives home at length in his last words, warning Dante against everyone

"Chi pesca per lo vero e non ha l'arte." <sup>170</sup>

Sigier is the last of his group named by Thomas. Joachim is the last named by Bonaventure, who then adds:

"Ad inveggiar cotanto paladino  
 Mi mosse la infiammata cortesia  
 Di fra Tommaso, e il discreto latino;  
 E mosse meco questa compagna." <sup>171</sup>

By the context the "paladin" would naturally be Joachim.<sup>172</sup> Bonaventure and his circle are moved to give Joachim enviable rank by the courtesy, kindled by charity, and the discriminating <sup>173</sup> words of Fra Tommaso. If Thomas in his great charity could exalt the culpable and personally obnoxious Sigier,

<sup>170</sup> *Par.* xiii, 123. Cf. *ib.* 109-142.

<sup>171</sup> *Par.* xii, 142-145.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. L. Filomusi-Guelfi, *Giorn. dant.* xxiii, 222-223.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. *discreta* in *Inf.* xxxi, 54.

Bonaventure assuredly might Joachim, even though disapproving him in some ways. Speaking of one of Joachim's writings Bonaventure comments: "By the just judgment of God his book was condemned in the Lateran Council."<sup>174</sup> Yet, on the other hand, Bonaventure gave assent to Joachim's prophecy of a holy age to come on earth.<sup>175</sup>

Dante presents no representative of the art of Rhetoric,—perhaps because his choice would have been ineligible to the Christian heaven. For he has named as his masters in style Virgil and Horace.<sup>176</sup> Also, the art of Grammar covered much more in the matter of style than to-day. Isidore defines it comprehensively as "skill in speaking," (*loquendi peritia*). Rhetoric, on the other hand, was chiefly concerned with legal and forensic argumentation.<sup>177</sup>

Finally, there goes to the equipping of a complete prophet the special grace of confirming his prophecy by working miracles.<sup>178</sup> But grace is only given *ad utilitatem*. Mira-

<sup>174</sup> *I Sent.* v, dub. 4.

<sup>175</sup> See below, p. 73.

<sup>176</sup> *Inf.* i, 85-87; *Vulg. eloq.* II, iv, 34.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. St. Isidore, *Etymol.* i, 1.

<sup>178</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxviii, 1.



cle-working would be supererogatory where prophecy obtains credence without it. And the prophets of the Sun have, each according to his own particular gift, so obtained credence. Indeed, the greater miracle is that without miracle-working they should have convinced mankind of their truth and utility. It is with them as with the winning of the world by the apostles, as Dante said:

“Se il mondo si rivolse al Cristianesimo,  
Diss’io, “senza miracoli, quest’uno  
E tal che gli altri non sono il centesimo.”<sup>179</sup>

Indeed, Dante conceived his twenty-four prophets—and himself—as called to continue the work of the apostles.<sup>180</sup>

#### CONVERGENCE OF THE TWENTY-FOUR LIGHTS UPON THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

The diverse gifts of all twenty-four prophets converge in operation to one end,—“cognition of divine truth, by contemplation of which we are not only instructed in the

<sup>179</sup> *Par.* xxiv, 106–108. Cf. St. Thomas, *In Matt.* x, prin<sup>o</sup>: “. . . hoc est maximum (miraculum), quia per duodecim vilissimos homines piscatores totus mundus conversus est.” St. Thomas is speaking after St. Augustine.

<sup>180</sup> See below, pp. 95 et seq.

faith, but also governed in our acts.”<sup>181</sup> Our faith turns chiefly, however, on these two,—true cognition of God as three in one, and the mystery of the Incarnation. Christ incarnate revealed the mystery of the Trinity; and on this revelation “is founded the whole faith of the Church, according to the words of Matthew (xvi, 18): *Super hanc petram, scilicet confessionis tue, aedificabo Ecclesiam meam.*”<sup>182</sup> So the reward of the prophets will be perfect understanding of this prime article of their faith prophesied.

“Tal era quivi la quarta famiglia  
Dell’alto padre che sempre la sazia,  
Mostrando come spira e come figlia.”<sup>183</sup>

And we are constantly reminded of this, their supreme preoccupation.<sup>184</sup> And thus, collectively, the twenty-four prophets in their specially inspired works embody the fourfold illumination of the Church, and the “reduction” of these to the highest illumination, “the light of grace and holy Scripture.”<sup>185</sup> The first illumination is by “external light,

<sup>181</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxiv, 6, c.

<sup>182</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>183</sup> *Par.* x, 49-51.

<sup>184</sup> E. g., *Par.* x, 1-3; xiii, 25-27, 52-57; xiv, 28-30.

<sup>185</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Reductio artium ad theologiam.*

i. e. of mechanical art," which illumines as to "artificial form"; the second is by "inferior light, i. e. of sense-cognition," which illumines as to "natural form"; the third is by "interior light, i. e. of philosophic cognition," which illumines as to intellectual truth; the fourth is "by light of grace and holy Scripture," which illumines as to "salutary truth." In Dante's scheme, artificial or artistic form in exposition and argument is controlled by Grammar and Dialectic (*logica utens*); sense-cognition, observation of things, supplies data for the demonstrative sciences controlled by Logic (*logica docens*), of which Physics concerns the truth of concrete things, Metaphysics the truth of abstract things, Ethics the truth of human acts; and finally, Theology brings truth salutary, or sum of all profitable truth, as contained under the fourfold sense of Scripture. And this, as said, altogether hinges on interpretation of the mystery of the Trinity:

"da quel punto

Dipende il cielo e tutta la natura."

#### NUMBER AND GROUPING OF THE SUN-SPIRITS

As expressive of the totality of illuminations of the Church, the Sun-spirits are,

according to medieval number-symbolism, twenty-four, or twelve doubled.<sup>186</sup> Specifically, however, the considerable if mysterious part played by the "twenty-four elders" in *Revelations* is certainly in Dante's mind. Church writers constantly if variously interpret these elders. Most often they are said to represent the patriarchs of the Old Testament and apostles of the New Testament.<sup>187</sup> From this, however, the step to their identification with the representative exponents, *doctors*, of the two Testaments is easy.<sup>188</sup> They are called "elders" for their wisdom.<sup>189</sup> Also "all preachers"—twenty-four as Fathers of the Old and New Testaments,<sup>190</sup> also "wise judges" to make manifest the mysteries of the Law, and fulfil God's will to save mankind.<sup>191</sup> Dante's sun-spirits include doctors, preachers,

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Albertus Magnus, *De laud. b. Mar. Virg.* XIII, vii, v, 11: "Per viginti quatuor sicut et per duodecim . . . universitas figuratur."

<sup>187</sup> E. g., St. Bonaventure, *Expos. in reg. frat. minor.* iii; Albert. Mag., *De laud. b. Mar. Virg.* XII, vii, v, 11, *In Apoc. b. Jo.*

<sup>188</sup> So e. g. Albert., *In Apoc.* v, 14: "Et viginti quatuor seniores, id est, universi doctores, etc." Cf. xix, 4.

<sup>189</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ib.* xi, 17.

<sup>191</sup> *Ib.* v, 10.

and judges. But another text of *Revelations* Albert interprets even more relevantly. "*Et in circuitu sedis sedilia viginti quatuor: et super thronos viginti quatuor seniores sedentes, circumamicti vestimentis albis, et in capitibus eorum coronae aureae.*"<sup>192</sup> Collating this text with *Matthew* xix, 28,<sup>193</sup> in which promise is made by Christ of only twelve seats with twelve that shall sit upon them, Albert harmonizes the two by declaring that one seat or throne refers to judiciary power, the other to apostolic dignity, and that there are so twelve seats in each class; or, twenty-four on account of the merits of the apostles and prophets.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, he distinguishes between the twenty-four seats and the twenty-four sitting upon them, in that the seats themselves represent all those in whom God "sits," i. e. the congregation of the faithful or lay-members of the Church, whereas those sitting upon the seats are so called, "because of their duty to govern and instruct in good works these as subject to them." Besides

<sup>192</sup> iv, 4.

<sup>193</sup> Jesus autem dixit illis: "Amendico vobis, quod vos qui secuti estis me, in regeneratione, cum sederit Filius hominis in sede majestatis suae, sedebitis et vos super sedes duodecim, judicantes duodecim tribus Israel."

<sup>194</sup> Ib., iv, 4.

their golden crowns of victory over the vices, they are clothed in white stoles, which Albert interprets as their resurrected bodies, so offering to Dante another suggestion for the third crown.<sup>195</sup> Finally, in connection with the following verse, *Rev.* iv, 5, Albert adds to the previous classes intended under the "elders" "the greater personages in the Church, . . . prelates."<sup>196</sup>

In the light of these indications, I think it may be said with confidence that the originals, so to speak, of Dante's twenty-four prophets of the Sun were St. John's twenty-four elders, as interpreted by the theologians. I have used Albert's interpretations for convenience, not meaning to imply that Dante necessarily used them rather than others. Not only were such interpretations widely current, but each writer added his own amendment or extension according to his learning and ingenuity.

Thus in collective, as well as in individual,

<sup>195</sup> *Ib.* Cf. above, p. 14. Dante himself uses "bianche stole" for the resurrected bodies in *Par.* xxv, 95, and explicitly after St. John in *Revelations*.

<sup>196</sup> *Ib.* 5. This verse also, among others, warrants interpretation of the seven lamps, or candelabra, as the gifts of the Holy Spirit possessed by the prophets of the Sun. Cf. below, pp. 64 et seq.

symbolic derivation, the twenty-four prophets may be considered together as constituting one whole group. Actually, however, Dante presents the first circle of twelve as a complete unit, and then the second circle as if springing<sup>197</sup> from the first. It may be as well, then, to consider the symbolic developments as he presents them, and first of the first circle by itself.

#### SIGNIFICATION OF THE FIRST CIRCLE

Dante first sees this circle as a crown of "living and victorious gleams" centered in himself and Beatrice.<sup>198</sup> As presently indicated, however, she, as the fair lady who renders him worthy of heaven, is the true center.<sup>199</sup> In this connection, as equivalent in function towards him, Beatrice may represent the Church, the Bride,—or the Lady on whose intercession the Church depends, the Virgin Mary. Dante himself is the *fidelis anima*, representing the congregation of the faithful or membership of the Church. The twelve gleaming lights crowning—or rather

<sup>197</sup> *Nascendo*. *Par.* xii, 13.

<sup>198</sup> *Par.* x, 64-65.

<sup>199</sup> *Par.* x, 92-93.

girdling—they, is first compared to the halo about the Moon:

“Così cinger la figlia di Latona  
Vedem tal volta, quando l’aere è pregno  
Sì che ritenga il fil che fa la zona.”<sup>200</sup>

As Christ, bridegroom and king, is symbolized in the Sun, the Church—or Mary—bride and queen, is also symbolized in the Moon.<sup>201</sup> We have already learned that the Sun makes “Delia’s girdle” of seven colors corresponding with those of the seven “streamers” of the candelabra, and that these streamers represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>202</sup> So the Church, or Mary, pregnant from the Holy Spirit, contains the *Filium*, the Son, who makes her girdle of the gifts, possession of which makes salvation possible.

#### CARRIERS OF THE SEVEN GIFTS

The seven gifts, which are “certain habitual dispositions of the soul, by which it is promptly moved by the Holy Spirit,”<sup>203</sup> are needed to supplement with divine instinct the natural

<sup>200</sup> *Par.* x, 67–69.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Albert. Mag., op. cit. VI, xiii; III, iv.

<sup>202</sup> *Purg.* xxix, 73–78.

<sup>203</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II–II, cxxi, 1.



instinct of reason, from which the moral virtues flow.<sup>204</sup> They are given to all that have charity, and each of them implies the rest.<sup>205</sup> Yet the meritorious action of one man may illustrate one gift especially; another that of another. So the individual living lights that constitute their symbol, the moon-girdle, might be expected severally to illustrate the seven particular gifts. And Dante's hints seem to bear out the expectation.

Four of the gifts appertain to cognition; three to volition. The four are understanding (*intellectus*), wisdom (*sapientia*), knowledge (*scientia*), and counsel (*consilium*); the three are piety (*pietas*), fortitude (*fortitudo*), and fear of the Lord (*timor Dei*). The four gifts are ordained to supernatural knowledge which in us takes its foundation from faith. By the gift of understanding the mind penetrates and grasps things beyond its natural faculty.<sup>206</sup> Dionysius and Richard of St. Victor clearly illustrate this gift. By the gift of wisdom man judges these supernatural things aright, esteeming that he should adhere to them and

<sup>204</sup> Ib. I-II, lxviii, 2.

<sup>205</sup> Ib. 5.

<sup>206</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, viii, 6, c.

turn away from their opposites.<sup>207</sup> Solomon and St. Thomas illustrate this gift, the former on the positive, the latter on the negative side in the *Contra Gentiles*. By the gift of knowledge man judges created things. Albertus Magnus, recognized authority on natural science, illustrates this gift, especially for the demonstrative sciences. St. Isidore, interpreter of the names of things, and Sigier, corrector of false inference from propositions concerning names of things, would illustrate dialectic science.<sup>208</sup> By the gift of counsel man judges individual actions.<sup>209</sup> Gratian's counsel clarified actions under both laws. Again, "the gift of counsel corresponds to prudence, as aiding and perfecting it."<sup>210</sup> Orosius, "*avvocato dei tempi cristiani*," by his *Historiae adversus paganos* aided and perfected St. Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, which as "concerning those things which make for the ultimate end," was preëminently a prudential work.

Of the three gifts affecting the will, that of

<sup>207</sup> Ib.

<sup>208</sup> "Scientia" is "rectitudo cognitionis . . . circa conclusiones." St. Thomas, *I Anal.* 44.

<sup>209</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, viii, 6, c.

<sup>210</sup> Ib. II-II, lii, 2, c.

fortitude is illustrated by Boethius, martyr. For martyrdom is the supreme act of fortitude.<sup>211</sup> Piety is owed, after God, *Pater omnium*, to parents and fatherland, *patria*.<sup>212</sup> Bede is specially cited for piety by Dante.<sup>213</sup> His *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* is deeply inspired by patriotism, *pietas patriae*, as well as by piety towards God. Fear of the Lord is given against pride, and is the beginning of humility,<sup>214</sup> and corresponds to the beatitude of the "poor in spirit."<sup>215</sup> Dante commends Peter Lombard rather for his likeness in humility to the "poor widow," *la poverella*, than for the value of his mite.<sup>216</sup>

The second group of twelve spirits form later a bow "like-colored"<sup>217</sup> with the first, and should therefore show like correspondences

<sup>211</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, cxxiv, 2.

<sup>212</sup> *Ib.* ci, 1.

<sup>213</sup> *Ep.* VIII, vii, 117.

<sup>214</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xix, 9, 4<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>215</sup> *Ib.* 12.

<sup>216</sup> *Par.* x, 106-108. St. Bonaventure cites the poor widow as the most perfect example of poverty in spirit: "paupertas . . . altissima sibi subtrahit etiam necessaria, sicut illa vidua, qui in gazophylacio de suis necessariis duo dedit minuta." *Eccles. Hierarch.* I, iv. Cf. *De paupertate Christi*, I, i.

<sup>217</sup> *Par.* xii, 11.

with the gifts. Some indeed fall readily into place. Supernatural understanding was given to Nathan and Joachim as foretellers. Illuminato, courting martyrdom with his master St. Francis, so expressed the gift of fortitude. Augustino, as related above,<sup>218</sup> showed superabounding piety towards his spiritual father, St. Francis. St. Anselm and Hugo of St. Victor would fill the bracket of wisdom for inspired judgment of supernatural things; Sts. Bonaventure and Chrysostom that of counsel in the temporal actions of men; Rabanus, Peter of Spain, and Donatus that of knowledge or science. Pietro Mangiadore, or Petrus Comestor, would so be left to represent "fear of the Lord," and if, as before, we may take humility and poverty in spirit as special marks of that gift, Peter's famous punning epitaph on himself would give warrant. It ran:

"Petrus eram, quem petra tegit; dictusque  
Comestor

Nunc comedor. Vivos docui nec cesso docere  
Mortuus, ut dicat, qui me videt intumultum:  
Quod sumus, iste fuit; erimus quandoque,  
quod hic est."

<sup>218</sup>p p. 37-38.

## SECONDARY SYMBOLISM OF THE CIRCLES

The primary business of all prophets is as spokesmen of the Holy Spirit to counsel men. In the exercise of this gift they resemble most the Holy Spirit itself, which is said "by the means of counsel to move the rational creature."<sup>219</sup> To be so moved, however, the creature must be "well-disposed," and the condition of docility results from possession of all the gifts. The final image in Canto x sums this doctrine. The wheel of twelve counselling prophets, moved by the Holy Spirit through its gifts, sounds a concordant note as a "clock-wheel," *orologio*, sounding harmonious chimes, invites the "well-disposed soul" to morning-worship.<sup>220</sup> The figure of the clock is also pertinent, since the right timing of actions is an important function of the gift of counsel.<sup>221</sup>

## PRIMACY OF CONTEMPLATIVES

That the Bride, the Church, might keep straight on her way to Christ, the Bride-

<sup>219</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, lii, 1, c.

<sup>220</sup> *Par.* x, 139-148.

<sup>221</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* III *Sent.* xxxv, 2, 4, sol. 1: ". . . recte consiliatur quis . . . si tempus sit conveniens rebus agendis, ne per diuturnitatem consilii tempus transeat." So Nathan wrongly advised David to build the Temple *at once*.

groom, Providence ordained two "princes" to escort her, one on either side, and one seraphic in heat of charity, the other cherubic in light of wisdom.<sup>222</sup> Both together represent perfect prudence, "which to the end of all life rightly counsels, judges, and commands."<sup>223</sup> These two, Dominic and Francis, were ordained to lead the Church

"per cammino

U'ben s'impingua, se non si vaneggia."<sup>224</sup>

For making the founders of the two great religious orders guiding "princes" of the Church Militant Dante had the authority of St. Bonaventure. In the subtly symbolical treatise, *Illuminationes Ecclesiae in Hexameron*,<sup>225</sup> St. Bonaventure orders the ecclesiastical hierarchy after the angelic. Highest are the contemplatives, who, moved by the Holy Spirit, are dedicate to divine things in three ways: (1) by supplication, (2) by speculation, (3) by ecstasy or rapture.<sup>226</sup> To

<sup>222</sup> *Par.* xi, 28-39.

<sup>223</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlvii, 13, c.

<sup>224</sup> *Par.* x, 95-96.

<sup>225</sup> *Sermo* xxii.

<sup>226</sup> "Sursumactivam, scilicet excedentium." "Excessus mentis," is the schoolmen's translation of the Greek *ἐκστασις*.

the first of these three grades belong the monastic orders dedicated to prayer and devotion, such as the Cistercian, Premonstrant, Carthusian, etc. These correspond to the Thrones. To the second grade belong those orders dedicated to "speculation," that is, principally doctrinal interpretation of Scripture. These correspond to the Cherubim, and are "the Preachers and the Minors," i. e. Dominicans and Franciscans. The Preachers, as their name implies, are given primarily to speculation, and secondarily to "unction," or holy meditation; <sup>227</sup> the Minors vice versa. And St. Bonaventure quotes St. Francis as having said that he wished his friars to study, provided they "did something" first: "for to know much, and taste not, what boots it?" <sup>228</sup> Whatever St. Francis may have meant, Bonaventure the mystic interpreted the word "taste," *gustare*, as an emotional experience. *Gustus* is the fifth

<sup>227</sup> *Unctio* is the second of the seven grades of contemplation, and is defined in St. Bonaventure's figurative language as "quidam roseus liquor, qui per totam animam se diffundens ipsam erudit, corroborat et confortat, disponens eam suaviter ad veritatis luculentias suscipiendas, atque pariter contemplandas, etc." *De septem gradibus contemplat.*, prin°.

<sup>228</sup> Ib.

grade of contemplation, and defined as "a certain instilled and delectable foredraught of the superinestimable divine sweetness." By receiving it, "we are conformed to the cognition of supercelestial substances."<sup>229</sup> St. Bonaventure's distinction, then, between Dominican and Franciscan activity is, to speak simply, one between the mystic's absorption in his own emotional experience and the theologian's doctrinal study and preaching. It is a distinction, however, of degree only. Both orders correspond, he declares, to the Cherubim, who signify "plentitude of knowledge or wisdom," as the Seraphim signify "fire of charity."<sup>230</sup> In St. Francis himself, indeed, so intense was charity that it exalted him to the sixth grade of contemplation, which is nearly that of the blest. From this "quiet," or absolute and habitual self-absorption in God, he rose momentarily to the seventh and final grade of "glory" when the six-winged Seraph appeared to him in vision to confer the

<sup>229</sup> Ib.: "Beneficio hujus gradus cognitio experientiae tribuitur, per quam supercoelestium substantiarum cognitioni conformamur."

<sup>230</sup> Ib., and II *Sent.* vi, 1, 1, concl. Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, lxiii, 7, 1<sup>m</sup>.



stigmata. So St. Bonaventure conceives St. Francis as constituting by himself a third, or "Seraphic order," which in the fulness of time may become an actual brotherhood, consummating the Church.<sup>231</sup> As consummative, this future "Seraphic order" is correspondent to the Holy Spirit. So after the age of the Old Testament, or of the Father, and after that of the New Testament, or of the Son, shall come the age of the Apocalypse, or of the Holy Spirit,—as indeed Joachim had prophesied.<sup>232</sup>

It is quite possible, I think, that Dante intended this future third order in those dim "new subsistences" which make a third circle around the other two in the heaven of the Sun, and which are hailed as "the true sparkling of the Holy Spirit."<sup>233</sup> This interpretation may coexist with that already given.<sup>234</sup> Though critics may forget it, Dante's allegory is multiple. The "new subsistences" remain angels; none else could represent a brother-

<sup>231</sup> *Illum. eccles.* xxii.

<sup>232</sup> *Ib.*: "Sex sunt tempora, quorum sextum tempus habet sex tempora cum quiete. Et sicut Christus in sexto tempore venit, ita oportet quod in fine generetur Ecclesia contemplativa."

<sup>233</sup> *Par.* xiv, 67-78.

<sup>234</sup> pp. 14 et seq.

hood not yet existent. Also, the interpretation gives point to the suggestive likeness of the three concentric circles in the Sun to those in the Empyrean avowedly signifying Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>235</sup> St. Thomas, indeed, is severe on the "vanity of those who say that any age of the Holy Spirit is to be expected."<sup>236</sup> Dante may have differed on this point, or he may have saved his loyalty by a distinction. I do not know. But at least St. Thomas would agree that the religious orders are right leaders in spiritual instruction.<sup>237</sup> Moreover, he was himself a friar.

#### DOMINICAN AND FRANCISCAN DOCTRINES

Dante's discipleship to St. Thomas is at any rate manifest in the symbolic relations between the first two circles, presided over by St. Thomas himself and St. Bonaventure. As the latter says, though both Preachers and Minors correspond to the Cherubim as seekers and diffusers of divine wisdom, yet the former proceed rather by the mode of the intellect,

<sup>235</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 115-120.

<sup>236</sup> *S. T.* I-II, cvi, 4, 2<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>237</sup> *Quol.* IV, xxiii, 18: "Status religionis est spiritualis militia proficientibus, et exercitium tirocinii incipientibus."

the latter rather by the mode of the will.<sup>238</sup> In other words, in his two groups of prophesiers Dante presents the two sides of the great medieval issue as to the primacy of the intellect or of the will. The two schools dividing on this issue were (1) the Platonic-Augustinian, dominant during the first half of the thirteenth century, and (2) the Aristotelian-Thomistic, which from 1245, when Albertus Magnus began his teaching at Paris, was becoming more and more influential, until Dante could declare its doctrines "virtually Catholic opinion."<sup>239</sup> The Franciscans generally adhered to the older school, asserting the preëminence of the idea of the good over that of the true, and defining the latter by the former. Also, they maintained the primacy of will over intellect, both in God and in man. So by act of will man attains to God.<sup>240</sup> Consequently, they emphasized the moral and mystical side of religious teaching, whereas their opponents, the Thomists, emphasized its intellectual and doctrinal side. For these the prime agency and the essential

<sup>238</sup> *Illum. eccles.* xxii.

<sup>239</sup> *Conv.* IV, vi, 145-150.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant*, etc., I, ii.

reward of salvation was the intellectual vision.  
So Dante:

“Quinci si può veder come si fonda  
L’esser bēato nell’atto che vede,  
Non in quel ch’ama, che poscia seconda.” <sup>241</sup>

Dante’s first circle, then, are either Thomists, or such as abetted or anticipated in principle the Thomist point of view. The second circle is of Augustinians and their natural allies.<sup>242</sup> The distinction may be variously illustrated. Thus Sigier served the discipline of the Aristotelian syllogism and logical argumentation, natural intellectualist mode of convincing. Donatus, as grammarian, more fitly served the Augustinian, who appealed rather to the affective side of human nature, and so employed rhetorical persuasion. Again, the Augustinians were indifferent, or even averse, to natural science; so that there is no exact pair to Albertus Magnus in the second circle. On the other hand, Illuminato and Augustino are presented as examples of right spiritual conduct solely. They wrote nothing. All of the first circle taught primarily by their writings.

<sup>241</sup> *Par.* xxviii, 109–111.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Mandonnet, *op. cit.* I, p. 287<sup>1</sup>.

## COÖPERATION OF THE TWO ORDERS

The important point of Dante's argument, however, is that the two schools are not antagonistic, but complementary.<sup>243</sup> St. Thomas and his group communicate by science the true; St. Bonaventure and his group communicate by charity the good. Of both groups it may be said, that "*ad un fine fur l'opere sue.*"<sup>244</sup> Both are needed.

"Degno è che dove l'un, l'altro s'induca  
Sì che com'elli ad una militaro,  
Così la gloria loro insieme luca."<sup>245</sup>

St. Thomas, as well as St. Dominic, was

"L'amoroso drudo  
Della fede cristiana, il santo atleta  
Benigno ai suoi, ed ai nemici crudo."<sup>246</sup>

Also, "*gran dottor,*"<sup>247</sup> he was granted, in his *Contra Gentiles*,

"contro al mondo errante  
Licenza di combatter per lo seme  
"Del qual ti fascian ventiquattro piante."<sup>248</sup>

<sup>243</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxxiii, 2.

<sup>244</sup> *Par.* xi, 42.

<sup>245</sup> *Par.* xii, 34-36.

<sup>246</sup> *Ib.* 55-57.

<sup>247</sup> *Ib.* 85.

<sup>248</sup> *Ib.* 94-96.

So St. Bonaventure, who always "set aside the left-hand care,"<sup>249</sup> wedded like his master, St. Francis, Poverty—in spirit as in material things; and so attained

"alla mercede  
Ch'ei meritò nel suo farsi pusillo."<sup>250</sup>

The extreme of the Franciscan principle of voluntary renunciation appears in the "nihilism" of Jacopone da Todi, according to whom the soul, to become all love, renounces even its own faculty of intellect, and enters into the "darkness":

"Priuato lo ntellecto,  
sguardando ne l' affecto,  
la luce che luce tenebrìa me pare."<sup>251</sup>

#### SYMBOLS OF THE JOINT SERVICE

Dante illustrates this complementary service of the two groups of spiritual leaders by a remarkable variety of symbolic images and similes. These are none of his own invention, however, but derive ultimately from Scripture, and occur constantly and variously applied in the writings of earlier and con-

<sup>249</sup> *Par.* xii, 129.

<sup>250</sup> *Par.* xi, 110-111. Cf. St. Bonaventure, *Sermones de tempore*, *Domen. xiv post Pentecost.* II: "Pusilli sunt homines, quorum est haereditas regni coelestis."

<sup>251</sup> *Lauda lxxxij*, 49-51. Ed. G. Ferri, Roma, 1910.

temporary theologians. Some of the figures are merely descriptive, such as comparison of the leaders of the two orders to "champions" of the army of the Church Militant,<sup>252</sup> to "pilots" of the "ship of Peter,"<sup>253</sup> to "shepherds" of Christ's sheep,<sup>254</sup> to keepers of his vineyard,<sup>255</sup> or of the "Catholic orchard."<sup>256</sup> But the rest allegorically enrich the conception of reciprocity itself. As "suns,"<sup>257</sup> the two groups respectively light the world with wisdom, and warm it with charity.<sup>258</sup> That the one act needs the complement of the other is implied in the image of the "holy millstone," i. e. the first circle, which

"nel suo giro tutta non si volse  
Prima ch'un'altra di cerchio la chiuse,  
E moto a moto e canto a canto la colse."<sup>259</sup>

<sup>252</sup> *Par.* xii, 37-45.

<sup>253</sup> *Par.* xi, 118-120.

<sup>254</sup> *Ib.* 124-132.

<sup>255</sup> *Par.* xii, 86-87.

<sup>256</sup> *Ib.* 104-105.

<sup>257</sup> *Par.* xi, 50.

<sup>258</sup> The conception of St. Dominic as primarily the light-giver would explain the implied prophetic signification of his mother's name of Giovanna. In the *Vita Nuova*, cap. xxiv, Giovanna is declared to be so named to correspond with Giovanni, precursor of the true Light. So Giovanna, as his mother, is the precursor of the light-bringer Dominic.

<sup>259</sup> *Par.* xii, 3-6.

*Two* millstones are needed for grinding.

This point made, Dante immediately metamorphoses the two concentric circles into the likeness of

"Due archi paralleli e concolori. . .  
Nascendo di quel d'entro quel di fuori  
(A guisa del parlar di quella vaga  
Ch'amor consunse, come sol vapori)." <sup>260</sup>

In this sequence speaks the Thomist, giving the primacy to intellect represented by the first, or inner, circle, of which the circle dedicated primarily to charity is "born" as a reflection, or echo. For although charity is before faith in the "order of perfection," it is subsequent in the "way of generation." <sup>261</sup> The rainbow has also a symbolic signification of its own, making

"qui la gente esser presaga  
Per lo patto che Dio con Noè pose  
Del mondo, che giammai più non si allaga." <sup>262</sup>

"By the rainbow is signified Christ, by whom we are protected from spiritual

<sup>260</sup> *Ib.* II, 13-15.

<sup>261</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, iv, 7. Cf. *Purg.* xxix, 127-129.

<sup>262</sup> *Par.* xii, 16-18.



flood.”<sup>263</sup> The two groups of interpreters have revealed Christ in his twofold nature and his twofold effect of light and love, further refracted by the Holy Spirit into the seven gifts.

Immediately, again, the two bows turn in Dante's imagination into two “garlands” of “sempiternal roses.”<sup>264</sup> The Rose as a symbol signifies, according to context, Christ or Mary or the Church or the faithful soul. Christ indeed was the “true Rose,” and Mary—or the Church or the faithful soul—may be conceived as a rose stained red with Christ's blood. And red is the color of flame, and by flame charity is signified.<sup>265</sup>

Again, the two leaders, Dominic and Francis—and by implication their later repre-

<sup>263</sup> St. Thomas, *Quol.* iii, 30. St. Bonaventure elaborates the image in connection with the Sun: “Arcus ille est Verbum increatum et incarnatum, radius Solis ingeniti exceptus in nube concava humanitatis assumptae.” *Compend. princip. in libros Sentent.* (Opera ed. Peltier, VI, p. 623.)

<sup>264</sup> *Par.* xii, 19–21. Cf. *Par.* x, 91–93.

<sup>265</sup> Albert. Mag., *De laud. b. Mar. Virg.* XII, iv, 33–34: “Et nota, quod Christus rosa, Maria rosa, Ecclesia rosa, fidelis anima rosa . . . Christus . . . vera fuit rosa, sanguine proprio rubricatus. Ipsa (Maria) non suo sanguine, sed sanguine Filii rubricata . . . Rosa enim coloris est ignei, et per ignem charitas designatur.” Cf. *Purg.* xxix, 122–123.

sentatives and spokesmen, Thomas and Bonaventure—are called the two wheels of the chariot of the Church.<sup>266</sup> The straightforward progress of the Church depends upon the perfect circularity of its wheels. If either get out of plumb, the pilot-car runs off the road, and the folk following are thrown into confusion, or—Dante changes his figure:

“ . . . tosto si vedrà della ricolta  
       Della mala cultura, quando il loglio  
       Si lagnerà che l'arca gli sia tolta.”<sup>267</sup>

In the surface-connection, the word *arca* means “bin.” A special appropriateness of its being taken away, if the chariot of the Church swerves from the path, will appear presently.<sup>268</sup>

#### ARIADNE'S CROWN

The final self-revealing image is formed by the two circles of gleaming lights, conceived as stars. Dante likens the resulting “sign in heaven” to the constellation known as Ariadne's Crown, doubled as by a shadow of itself.

<sup>266</sup> *Par.* xii, 106–108.

<sup>267</sup> *Ib.* 112–120.

<sup>268</sup> *p.* 86.

"E l'un nell'altro aver li raggi suoi,  
 Ed ambedue girarsi per maniera  
 Che l'uno andasse al prima' e l'altro al poi,'—  
 Ed avrà quasi l'ombra della vera  
 Costellazion e della doppia danza  
 Che circolava il punto dov'io era." <sup>269</sup>

The primacy of the intellectualist group emphasizing faith is so again insisted on. Their common song, however, is of the first two fundamental articles on the Trinity and the Incarnation,<sup>270</sup> of which, according to St. Thomas, explicit profession is obligatory.<sup>271</sup>

#### COMPOSITION OF ARIADNE'S CROWN

The symbol of the doubled Crown serves visibly to sum the lesson of the Sun, as later the Cross in Mars,<sup>272</sup> the Eagle in Jupiter, and the Ladder in Saturn. The Crown, moreover,

<sup>269</sup> *Par.* xiii, 16-21.

<sup>270</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxiv, 6: "Fides nostra in duobus principaliter consistit: *primo* quidem in vero Dei cognitione . . . *secundo* in mysterio Incarnationis Christi."

<sup>271</sup> *S. T.* II-II, ii, 7-8. Cf. Dante's own confession of faith in *Par.* xxiv, 130-147.

<sup>272</sup> As one possible suggestion for these heavenly signs may be cited the "burning Cross" which Constantine saw in the sky, and which carried the motto—"Triumph by this sign." Eusebius, *Vita Constant.* I, 28-29.

is a symbol of symbols; and Dante carefully indicates these, its component parts:

“Imagini chi bene intender cupe  
 Quel ch’io or vidi (e ritenga l’image  
 Mentre ch’io dico, come ferma rupe)  
 Quindici stelle che in diverse plage  
 Lo cielo avvivan di tanto sereno  
 Che soperchia dell’aere ogni compage;  
 Imagini quel Carro a cui il seno  
 Basta del nostro cielo e notte e giorno,  
 Sì ch’al volger del temo non vien meno;  
 Imagini la bocca di quel corno  
 Che si comincia in punta dello stelo  
 A cui la prima rota va dintorno—  
 Aver fatto di sè due segni, etc.” <sup>273</sup>

Dante solemnly exhorts his reader to hold to this complicated image “as to a solid rock.” We may well do so, for the image indeed is of the “rock,” the spiritual foundation, on which the Church is built.

We are given then, (1) the fifteen fixed stars of the first magnitude, according to the Ptolemaic astronomy; (2) the brighter seven of Ursa Major, which form the so-called Wain, or Carro; (3) the brighter two of Ursa Minor, which, connected with imaginary lines with “the point of the axis” of the celestial

<sup>273</sup> *Par.* xiii, 1-13.

sphere, would outline a "Horn." Furthermore, we are reminded that the Wain, or Car, is perpetually above the horizon of the habitable earth, provided that its "pole" is not swerved aside. I say "reminded" advisedly, for we have heard already of the Car drawn by the Griffin in the procession of the Church in the Earthly Paradise, and more recently of the Chariot of which Dominic and Francis are the two wheels.<sup>274</sup> The war-chariot, *biga*, is the Church Militant against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The car, *carro*, is the Church conceived as the vehicle, or vessel, in which man is conveyed to heaven, and of which the prototype would be the car of Elijah.<sup>275</sup> Also, as alternative to *carro* Dante uses the word *plaustro*.<sup>276</sup> *Plaustum* is the term used in the *Vulgate* for the car, or cart, on which the ark of the Covenant was carried in the exodus of Israel from

<sup>274</sup> *Purg.* xxix., 106 et seq.; *Par.* xii, 106 et seq. The correspondence of the verse numbers may be noted.

<sup>275</sup> *Inf.* xxvi, 35. Dante uses also the figure of the "ship,"—e. g. *Par.* xi, 117-120. Cf. St. Bonaventure, *IV Sent.* xiv, 1, dub. 1: ". . . mare est mundus iste . . . Navis per quam homo transit super undas hujus maris est . . . Ecclesia."

<sup>276</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 95.

Egypt.<sup>277</sup> Dante twice interprets that exodus to signify allegorically our redemption.<sup>278</sup> The ark of the Covenant contained the tables of the Law, Aaron's rod, and the pot of manna,<sup>279</sup> to which articles, as will be shown presently, a spiritual signification was given in the Christian Church. The word *arca* is also used by Dante for the body of the car of the Church.<sup>280</sup> We may see, then, the meaning of the passage in which it is said that if the car of the Church swerve from the right path, the "ark" shall be taken away from the "tare."<sup>281</sup> From the "tare," i. e. the unfaithful soul, shall be taken away the ark of the Covenant by which he might have been saved.<sup>282</sup>

<sup>277</sup> *II Reg.* 6.

<sup>278</sup> *Ep.* x, sect. 7; *Conv.* II, i, 62-65. It is also sung of by the spirits entering into Purgatory—*Purg.* ii, 46. Cf. also *Par.* xxv, 55-57.

<sup>279</sup> *Exod.* xxxvii, 1; *Hebr.* ix, 4.

<sup>280</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 125.

<sup>281</sup> *Par.* xii, 112-120.

<sup>282</sup> An extension of this metaphor appears in the last image of the *Comedy*:

". . . già volgeva il mio disiro e il *velle*  
Sì come ruota ch'egualmente è mossa,  
L'Amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle."

The adverb *egualmente* implies a twofold "equality." (1) Dante's now superrationally ordered appetitive nature, —ordered, that is, by a divinely infused *intelletto d'amore*,—rolls like a perfectly circular wheel evenly with the divine

The Wain, as a constellation, gives guidance to mariners—and so figuratively to the “ship” of the Church—because the line through its two hinder stars points to the “fiery wheel” of the Love which is of God, and is God. (Albert calls “celestial essences” “fiery wheels”—*igneæ rota*—*Opera* XXXII, p. 362.) (2) The two wheels by which the human soul is carried into action are instinctive desire (*disiro*) and rational will (*velle*). By its act of judgment the rational will accepts, or rejects, the desire as a motive of action. (“*Velle est actio manens in voluntate.*” St. Thomas, *Cont. Gent.* I, lxxix, fin.) Obviously, acceptance of any desire as a motive of action is rational only if the desire in question is possible of attainment. In other words, the two wheels of *il disiro* and *il velle* must turn “equally.” If one wheel were smaller than the other, or if either were out of plumb (Cf. *Par.* xii, 112–114), the active progress of the soul could not be straightforward or even. By his rapture, however, Dante is conformed to God, “*la prima Equalita,*” so called because in him all faculties are perfect and therefore equal. (*Par.* xv, 73–78.)

Moreover, in this last image of the poem, the saved individual soul reproduces in miniature the symbol of the Church, its agency of salvation. It too appears as a car, consisting of a body or “ark” carried on two wheels, and drawn by Christ’s love. Thus fittingly, the final cause of the Church, which is the salvation of the individual, is visually conformed to the Church itself as efficient cause, and—as a matter of literary symmetry—the dramatic climax of the *Purgatory* balances and is bound in with that of the *Paradise*. (In addition to the sources of the symbol indicated above, further warrant and allegorical enrichment were given by the text of the *Song of Songs* iii, 9–10: “*Ferculum fecit sibi rex Salomon de lignis Libani, columnas ejus fecit argenteas, reclinatorium aureum,*

pole-star.<sup>283</sup> And as the Wain is always above our horizon, its guidance is perpetual.<sup>284</sup> And so the guidance of the Church was intended to be; but she has made perverse use of her freedom. In the real constellation, four stars outline the body of the Wain, three its pole; its wheels are left to the imagination. Needing the wheels for his symbolism, Dante seems to have requisitioned two superfluous stars from the pole. It is not the only case of his modifying physical fact to fit spiritual or symbolic truth.

#### THE LIVING STARS OF THE "MOUTH OF THE HORN"

To enter into the car of the Church, which conveys him to heaven, man as a penitent

ascensum purpureum, media charitate constravit propter filias Jerusalem." Cf. especially Albert. Mag., op. cit. X, iv: *Maria ferculum*. Also, he and other theologians variously color the assumed allegorical meaning of the text in their commentaries on the *Song of Songs*. The matter is of capital importance in connection with the signification of Beatrice in the chariot in the Earthly Paradise, but to discuss that signification here would carry us too far afield.)

<sup>283</sup> Cf. *Purg.* xxx, 1-6.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *In Job* ix, 2: "Arcturus quidem est quaedam constellatio in coelo, quae vocatur Ursa major, et habet septem stellas claras, quae nunquam nobis occidunt, sed semper circumeunt polum septentrionalem."



must receive baptism.<sup>285</sup> Speaking through the mouths of his prophets, God called men to repentance before he revealed himself in Christ. Two above all were his mouthpieces, —Moses, “supreme prophet” of the Old Law, and John the Baptist, who, as announcing the New Law, was “not only prophet, but more than prophet.”<sup>286</sup> They par excellence would be the stars forming “the mouth of the horn”

“Che si comincia in punto dello stelo  
A cui la prima rota va dintorno,”—

“point” figuratively one with “that point” from which

“Dipende il cielo e tutta la natura,”<sup>287</sup>

to wit, God. But for other reasons, Dante substitutes the “prophets” Nathan and Joachim as equivalent in function.

#### THE FIFTEEN FIXED STARS

The car of the Church moves from and to Christ. Her efficient cause is the Word incarnate; her final cause the Word as it is with God. The Word was made flesh in Mary

<sup>285</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* III, lxviii, 4.

<sup>286</sup> *Ib.* II-II, clxxiv, 4; III, xxxviii, 1.

<sup>287</sup> *Par.* xxviii, 41-42.

by the instrumentality of the announcing angel Gabriel, messenger of the Holy Spirit. According to St. Bonaventure, indeed, Mary conceived from the Word spoken into her ear by Gabriel.

“Gaude, virgo Maria, Mater Christi,  
Quae per aurem concepisti,  
Gabriele nuntio.” <sup>288</sup>

By this reckoning, the divine factors of the Church are three: (1) Christ incarnate, fruit of (2) Mary and (3) Gabriel, “angelic love,” transmitting agency of the Holy Spirit.<sup>289</sup>

Christ on earth personally propagated the Word; before returning to heaven, he appointed twelve apostles to propagate it in the four parts of the earth. Because they had been with Christ, and had received the Word directly from him, the apostles received and gave a more than human illumination to mankind, especially as interpreters of the

<sup>288</sup> *Corona b. Mar. Virg.*, prin°.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. *Par.* ii, 8-9:

“Minerva spira, e conducemi Apollo,  
E nove Muse mi dimostran l’Orse.”

The three divine illuminations—Minerva or Mary, Apollo or Christ, and the nine Muses or orders of angelic love collectively transmitting revelation, inspire Dante to accept the guidance of the Bears or the Church.

Word as it is written in Scripture.<sup>290</sup> They may therefore be reckoned as semi-divine factors of the Church.

Now exactly these fifteen superhuman—three divine and twelve semi-divine factors, or illuminations, of the Church are pointed out to Dante in the heaven of the Stars.<sup>291</sup> They appear there as the fifteen stars of the first magnitude, but are also described figuratively according to their respective virtues. Christ is called a “sun” as source of all illumination.<sup>292</sup> In the fair garden flowering under his rays, Mary is the rose in which the Word was made flesh, and the apostles are lilies,

“Al cui odor si prese il buon cammino.”<sup>293</sup>

The rose is especially the emblem of char-

<sup>290</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, li, 4, c: “. . . Apostolis dedit (Deus) scientiam Scripturarum, et omnium linguarum, quam homines per studium, vel consuetudinem acquirere possunt licet non ita perfecte.”

<sup>291</sup> *Par.* xxiii. The description of the fifteen stars,  
“che in diverse plage

Lo cielo avvivan di tanto sereno

Che soperchia dell'aere ogni compage,”

(*Par.* xiii, 4-6) may intend allegorically that the fifteen belong to a higher sphere than that of “air,” i. e. mortality. Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, lxviii, 4; II-II, clxxv, 3, 4<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>292</sup> *Ib.* 25-39.

<sup>293</sup> *Ib.* 70-75.

ity; the lily of faith.<sup>294</sup> Gabriel, angel of the Annunciation and representative of "angelic love," is presented as a flaming torch that descends upon Mary, and then circling, describes a crown about her head.<sup>295</sup> So is indicated at once her conception and her coronation, her own flame of charity, angelic love, being expressed in each.<sup>296</sup>

These are the divine illuminations of the Church Triumphant:

"Quivi trionfa, sotto l'alto Filio  
 Di Dio e di Maria, di sua vittoria,  
 E con l'antico e col nuovo concilio,  
 Colui che tien le chiavi di tal gloria."<sup>297</sup>

The Church Militant conforms to the Triumphant.<sup>298</sup> So illuminations correspondent to these fifteen should appear in the Church Militant, and therefore among the living stars of Ariadne's Crown.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. *Purg.* xxix, 84, 145-150.

<sup>295</sup> *Ib.* 94-108.

<sup>296</sup> Cf. St. Bonaventure, *Psalter. majus b. Mar. virg.* 6:

"Ut ignis in rubo, et ros in vellere: descendit in te aeternum verbum Dei Spiritu sancto foecundante: obumbravit tibi virtus Altissimi."

<sup>297</sup> *Par.* xxiii, 136-139.

<sup>298</sup> Cf., e. g., St. Bonaventure, *II Sent.* iv, 2.

HUMAN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
DIVINE THREE

Between the three divine factors of the Church—Christ, Mary, Gabriel—and three of the prophets of the Sun correspondences are manifest. Solomon is “divinest light of the inner circle,”<sup>299</sup> circle closest to the center of divine truth in Beatrice. His light is also “loveliest” in charity:

“La quinta luce, ch'è tra noi più bella,  
Spira di tale amor che tutto il mondo  
Laggiù ne gola di saper novella.”<sup>300</sup>

Such praise might be applied fittingly to Christ himself. Indeed, in temporal wisdom Solomon is before Christ.<sup>301</sup> Furthermore, Solomon was taken by theologians as a type of Christ.<sup>302</sup>

Two others of the inner circle are accredited with more than human powers, and so would

<sup>299</sup> *Par.* xiv, 34-35.

<sup>300</sup> *Par.* x, 109-III.

<sup>301</sup> *Par.* xiii, 34-III.

<sup>302</sup> Cf., e. g., St. Bonaventure, *Princip. sacr. script.*, circa fin. (Vol. IX, p. 15): “. . . in figura pacifici Salomonis praefiguratur Christus.” Also, ‘Solomon’s mother in *I Kings* ii, 19, is identified with Mary. Cf. Albert. Mag., *De laud. b. Mar. Virg.* XII, vii, v, 3.

illumine more divinely than the rest. One is

"Il lume di quel cero  
"Che giuso in carne più addentro vide  
L'angelica natura e il ministero." <sup>303</sup>

Dionysius is clearly *the* inspired interpreter of "angelic love." The other is that Riccardo

"Che a considerar fu più che viro." <sup>304</sup>

His teaching would, in degree, possess that direct and intuitive insight ascribed to the teaching of Mary, who from her intimate knowledge of her Son was supposed not only to hold the key of the Scriptures, but even to have dictated in part the Gospels themselves.<sup>305</sup> She was therefore especially competent to interpret the spiritual sense behind the letter.<sup>306</sup> And, as said,<sup>307</sup> Richard of St. Victor was especially accredited with that power. Also, as in Mary, human nature was

<sup>303</sup> *Par. x*, 115-117.

<sup>304</sup> *Par. x*, 132.

<sup>305</sup> Albert. Mag., *De laud. b. Mar. Virg. IV*, xxxi, 2: ". . . quatuor Evangelistas multa dictasse creditur eorum quae scribebant."

<sup>306</sup> *Ib.* 11: "Et abscondita sub velamine litterae produxit in lucem spiritualis intelligentiae."

<sup>307</sup> Above, pp. 29-30.

exalted above the angelic "by grace of comprehension," <sup>308</sup> so Richard

"A considerar fu più che viro." <sup>309</sup>

#### REPRESENTATIVES OF THE APOSTLES

Primary object of the teaching of the prophets of the Sun is, as we have seen, the mystery of the Trinity. For the apostles, says St. Thomas, numbered twelve that three might preach the divine Three in each of the four parts of the world.<sup>310</sup> Medieval theologians variously classified the apostles according to supposed individual virtues or special missions. Dante is in no wise original, therefore, in making the three principal apostles—Peter, James, and John <sup>311</sup>—exponents especially of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.<sup>312</sup> As custodian of the faith, Peter holds the keys of salvation;<sup>313</sup> and transmitted them with the

<sup>308</sup> St. Bonaventure, II *Sent.* ix, I, 5, c.

<sup>309</sup> *Par.* x, 132.

<sup>310</sup> *In Joan.* VI, i, 9: ". . . duodecim esse dicuntur, quia fides sanctae Trinitatis per eos predicanda erat in quatuor partibus mundi."

<sup>311</sup> Cf. *Par.* xxv, 31-33.

<sup>312</sup> *Par.* xxiv-xxvi. Cf. G. Busnelli, *il concetto e l'ordine del 'Paradiso' dantesco*, 1911, I, 153-156.

<sup>313</sup> *Par.* xxiv, 34-36.

power they signify to his successors, the popes. The natural correspondent to the apostle Peter, then, would be the one pope in Dante's list,—Pietro Ispano, who became John XXI. The "twelve booklets" in which he shone below, by defining right logic, controlled the "argument" by which from the articles of faith is "syllogized" Christian theology.<sup>314</sup> Peter Lombard indeed defines the two keys as "scientia discernendi" and "potentia judicandi."<sup>315</sup> Intellectually, Logic forms these keys.

St. James, apostle of hope, is especially commended by Beatrice for his "bounty."<sup>316</sup> This, and the fact that Dante uses verbatim Peter Lombard's definition of hope, suggest as fit correspondent in apostolic function to St. James this one who

"con la poverella  
Offerse a Santa Chiesa suo tesoro."<sup>317</sup>

There are, Dante declares to St. John, three supreme authorities for God as Love, and as primal object of love, Aristotle's argument,

<sup>314</sup> Cf. *Par.* xxiv, 76–78.

<sup>315</sup> IV, dist. xviii.

<sup>316</sup> *Par.* xxv, 29–30.

<sup>317</sup> *Par.* x, 107–108.



God's own testimony to Moses, and your Gospel

“cominciando  
L'alto preconio, che grida l'arcano  
Di qui laggiù sopra ogni altro bando.” <sup>318</sup>

“The secret,” or mystery, is that of the Incarnation, supreme act of divine love. The purpose of the Gospel of St. John, according to St. Bonaventure, is to define the union of the two natures in Christ incarnate.<sup>319</sup> Of Dante's doctors one was celebrated for his discussion of this mystery, to wit, St. Anselm in his *Cur Deus Homo*. To throw light upon the mystery of the Incarnation was his apostolic mission as it was St. John's, the beloved of Christ.

St. Andrew, who converted to Christ his brother Peter and suffered martyrdom by crucifixion, and whose name signifies “virilis,” i. e. willingness “to fight for justice even unto death,” <sup>320</sup> is also especially commended for having by preaching and practice shown up the vanity of this world.<sup>321</sup> From every angle,

<sup>318</sup> *Par.* xxvi, 37-45.

<sup>319</sup> *In evang. Joan*, cap. i, prin°.

<sup>320</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Expos. Missae*, iv, circa fin.

<sup>321</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Sermones de sanctis*, *De S. Andrea Apos.*, sermo I.

therefore, St. Andrew's apostolic mission is paralleled in principle by the martyred St. Severinus, or Boethius, who, having seen the true good,

"Il mondo fallace  
Fa manifesto a chi di lei ben ode." <sup>322</sup>

In the names of Andrew and Philip, says St. Thomas, may be understood two things needful for preachers who would lead men to Christ: (1) the discretion of well-ordered speaking, which is indicated in the name Philip as interpreted "*os lampadis*," "mouth of splendor;" (2) the virtue of good operation, as denoted in the name Andrew as interpreted "*virile*." <sup>323</sup> For eloquence as a preacher especially St. John Chrysostom was famous, and for it received his cognomen meaning "mouth of gold."

The name of the apostle Matthew is interpreted "*donatus*;" "by which," says St. Bonaventure, "is implied that doctrine should be edificatory toward what is to be done (*ad*

<sup>322</sup> *Par. x*, 125-126.

<sup>323</sup> *In Joan. XII*, iv, 3. Cf. St. Bonaventure, *In Luc. vi*, me<sup>o</sup>: "*Philippum*, qui interpretatur os lampadis. In quo insinuat, quod doctrina episcopalis debet esse lucida, quantum ad intellectum audientium, etc."

*operandum*) . . . For the word of the preacher confers the virtue of grace of preaching and edification.”<sup>324</sup> Also, St. Matthew illustrates the saying that the humble shall be exalted, since from a publican he was exalted to be an apostle.<sup>325</sup> So the humble grammarian Donatus has been exalted to be an indispensable authority in that doctrine, or discipline, which edifies, or builds up, the operation, or discourse, of the preacher. Certainly, at least neither Dante nor his contemporaries were averse to such play on words and names.

The name of Bartholomew is interpreted “*filius suspendentis aquas*,” i. e. Christ.<sup>326</sup> “*Aquas*” is variously understood, but commonly as “waters of wisdom.” Waters are “suspended” by their sources. The authority on the “sources” of the “waters of wisdom” was St. Isidore’s *Origines, seu Etymologiae*.

“Thomas is interpreted *abyssus*; by which is understood profundity of erudition in what is to be believed (*credendorum*).”<sup>327</sup> The natural correspondent would be Albertus Magnus, *doctor universalis*.

<sup>324</sup> Ib.

<sup>325</sup> Ib. v, circa fin.

<sup>326</sup> St. Thomas, *In Matt.* x, prin°.

<sup>327</sup> St. Bonaventure, *In Luc.* vi, me°.

The remaining four apostles are classified together by St. Bonaventure as examples of "good conversation" (*conversatio bona*).<sup>328</sup> "James, which is interpreted "wrestler" (*luctor*), son of Alphaeus, which is interpreted "fleeing," signifies the example of perfect poverty. Wherefore Gregory: "Let him who enters into conflict with the devil, cast away his clothing, lest he succumb. But what are all earthly things, if not certain vestments of the body." St. Francis literally and figuratively cast away his clothing, and wrestled especially with the devil in person of the Soldan. And Illuminato was there with him.

Simon, interpreted "obedient," surnamed Zelotes, that is, "emulator," gave example of "perfect humility" with the emulation of ordered charity. And such was the quality of the second of those two

"Che fur dei primi scalzi poverelli  
Che nel capestro a Dio si fero amici,"<sup>329</sup>

the humble and loving gardener of the convent,—Augustin.

Judas, i. e. "confessing" (*confitens*), brother of James, is example of brotherly action, to

<sup>328</sup> Ib.

<sup>329</sup> *Par.* xii, 131-132.

whom apply the words of *Deuteronomy* xxxiii, 7: "His hands shall fight for him, and he will be his aid against his adversaries." <sup>330</sup> And "he shall go up before others into the battle." So Orosius was early in the fight against the traducers of Christianity, lending his aid to St. Augustine. <sup>331</sup>

Lastly, Judas Iscariot is interpreted "mindful of death" (*memoria mortis*) "in which is signified example of mortification of the flesh." But, continues St. Bonaventure, this virtue is the natural weapon of the dissembler; and he quotes St. Paul <sup>332</sup> on the prevalence in these last perilous days of traitors "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." So in place of the traitor Judas was set Matthias, that is, "the gift of the Lord." Sigier combines both Judas and Matthias. He goes "mindful of death,"

"in pensieri

Gravi, a morir gli parve venir tardo." <sup>333</sup>

In the *Impossibilia*, as shown above, <sup>334</sup> he syllogizes blasphemous conclusions, acting in

<sup>330</sup> *Vulgate.*

<sup>331</sup> *Par. x*, 118-120.

<sup>332</sup> *II Tim.* iii, 1 et seq.

<sup>333</sup> *Par. x*, 134-135.

<sup>334</sup> pp. 49 et seq.

so far the traitor Judas, making thereafter, however, the gift of correction and true conclusion, so superseding Judas in Matthias. It is possible, also, that Dante would imply in Sigier an originally false, or Judas-like, interpretation of Aristotle after Averroës, later recanted and repented.<sup>335</sup>

One apostle—*the* apostle above all<sup>336</sup>—St. Paul, is not included in this scheme. Dante, I think, had not forgotten him, but consistently, more even in the *Comedy* than in the *New Life*, conceives himself as carrying on the mission of St. Paul. The supreme correspondence would be of course their common vision of God in rapture, but Dante gives many others. His claim may be only poetic feigning, though by no means certainly so; but in any case the correspondence profoundly affects the poem itself. Dante himself, for instance, exemplifies as protagonist many if not most of the special gifts and illuminations possessed severally by his twenty-four prophets of the Sun; and the

<sup>335</sup> Cf. above, pp. 49 et seq.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *Opus*. lxxiii, 1: “. . . theologus hoc nomen apostolus, determinat ad missos speciales Christi, et adhuc singulariter ad personam Pauli, quando sine adjectione dicitur.”

poem itself is a *summa*, or epitome, of their joint wisdom further illumined by the "grace freely given" of eloquence.

#### REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CAR

There remains to identify the Wain, or car of the Church Militant on earth. The two which represent the wheels must, as already said, be Thomas and Bonaventure as chief disciples of the founders of the two orders. St. Bonaventure, as stressing especially the virtue of charity, would represent the right wheel; for Dante assigns to the right wheel the theological virtues of which the chief is charity.<sup>337</sup> St. Bonaventure was also called *doctor seraphicus* for being seraphic in charity.<sup>338</sup> Also, St. Thomas properly represents the left wheel, since to this are assigned the cardinal virtues, of which the chief is prudence, and prudence in the more general sense applies to all human cognition, speculative as well as practical. As speculative, prudence is that "provision" (*proculvisio*) of God which is faith.<sup>339</sup> His cognomen of *doctor*

<sup>337</sup> *Purg.* xxix, 121-126.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. *Par.* xi, 37.

<sup>339</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlvii, 2, 2<sup>m</sup>.

*angelicus* implies his more than human insight into things above sense; for the common virtue of all angels is revelation, which is transmitted by them to men, and more fully to "superior men whom it behooves to instruct others."<sup>340</sup>

While on earth, and still from heaven, Christ gave and gives true direction to the Church. By his humanity he was subject to divine law; by his divinity he is divine law.<sup>341</sup> As vicariously authorized, the popes and councils of the Church have interpreted this divine law, and decreed special enactments of it. These directive interpretations and decrees were codified by Gratian in his *Decretum*. He may therefore be said to have taken the place of the Griffin as directive of the Car of the Church, and also as properly distinguishing between the two "forums" of the two-natured Law governing mankind, canon and civil. In other words, his star signifies the guiding pole (*timone*) of the Car.

The body of the Car symbolizes, as already said, the Ark of the Covenant, containing (1) the tables of the Law, (2) the rod of Aaron,

<sup>340</sup> St. Thomas, S. T. II-II, ii, 2, c; *Opus*. lx (*De human. Christi*), I.

<sup>341</sup> St. Thomas, S. T. I-II, xciii, I, 2<sup>m</sup>; 4, 2<sup>m</sup>.



(3) the pot of manna. This sacred ark was set by Solomon in the inner tabernacle, or holy of holies, of the Temple. Both it and its contents were elaborately and variously interpreted by medieval churchmen.<sup>342</sup> According to St. Bonaventure,<sup>343</sup> the ark signifies the "library," or repository (*biblioteca*) of the Scriptures; its contents their contents as interpreted (1) historically, as symbolized in the two "tables" conceived as "testimonies;"<sup>344</sup> (2) mystically, as symbolized in the pot of manna, i. e. "bread of angels," or wisdom;<sup>345</sup> (3) morally, as symbolized in Aaron's rod.<sup>346</sup>

(1) Representative of the historical interpretation are Pietro Mangiadore with his *Historia Scholastica*, which, bringing the history of the Church down to the time of the Apostles, gives testimony of the Old Dispensation, and Bede with his *Historia ec-*

<sup>342</sup> Cf., e. g., St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, cii, 6<sup>m</sup>; *In Hebr.* ii.

<sup>343</sup> *In Psalter.* lxvii.

<sup>344</sup> Cf. Albert. Mag., *De laud. b. Mar. Virg.* X, i, 6: ". . . tabulas in quibus scriptum erat testamentum, cum quaecumque ibi erant, possunt dici testimonia."

<sup>345</sup> Cf. *Ib.* XII, v, II, 4.

<sup>346</sup> Cf. also, St. Bonaventure, *Sermo in die Pentecostes xii*: "Unde virga Aaron florem et fructum simul habuit, quia in rectitudine fidei bonae voluntatis non est sine fructu boni operis."

*clesiastica gentis Anglorum*, which gives testimony of the New.

(2) Representative of the mystical interpretation is Hugh of St. Victor.<sup>347</sup>

(3) Representative of the moral interpretation is Rabanus, especially in the teaching of his school and the government of his convent.

#### ARIADNE'S CROWN AND BEATRICE

According to the interpreted symbolism of *Revelations* iv, 10,<sup>348</sup> the twenty-four "elders" may be conceived as casting their "crowns" i. e. their works of illumination, before the throne of God. Dante, however, at least adds a more ingenious and graphic symbolism. Such emulative invention was the rule among theological writers. Conceiving his personages, or their illuminating works, as stars,<sup>349</sup> he first identifies these with two classes of real stars, namely, those fixed in the heavens like diviner natures, and those which, con-

<sup>347</sup> Cf. above, p. 30. Also, one of Hugh's works was entitled *De archa mystica*.

<sup>348</sup> See above, p. 30.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. *Conv.* II, xvi, 9-12: ". . . in ciascuna scienza la scrittura è stella piena di luce, la quale quella scienza dimostra."

stellated and revolving around the pole-star, serve as guides to mankind; and then imagines these stars gathering and singing together to form the crown of Ariadne, who signifies at once the Church and the Mother of the Church, Mary, and the faithful soul, daughter of the Church. For Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, regent of the lower world, i. e. the earth, was raised to heaven and crowned by Bacchus, i. e. Christ.

A much stressed text is that of *Revelations* xii, 1: "*Signum magnum apparuit in coelo, mulier amicta sole, et luna sub pedibus ejus, et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim.*" St. Bonaventure declares it preëminent among "signs" given to men:

"Vidit Joannes mysticum  
Signum quoddam mirabile,  
Quod in coelo propheticum  
Apparuit notabile.  
Nunquam fuerat simile  
Prophetis aenigmaticum  
Signum datum, quod utile,  
Praecedens ut mirificum." <sup>350</sup>

By one reading, the "woman clothed with the Sun," is the "contemplative soul," the Moon

<sup>350</sup> *Laus b. Virg. Mar.*

under her feet is the Church Militant—to give needed support.<sup>351</sup> The crown which rewards the soul would then be of the twelve stars as signifying the twelve “considerations” which “adorn the soul.”<sup>352</sup> By another reading, the Woman is the Church herself, trampling underfoot the Moon, i. e. unstable worldly things. The twelve stars of her crown become the twelve articles of faith,<sup>353</sup> or the saints

<sup>351</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Illum. eccles.*, sermo xxii, prin°: “Sicut enim anima contemplativa est mulier bona amicta Sole, ita Luna est sub pedibus ejus non ad conculcandum, sed ad stabiliendum, scilicet militans Ecclesia. Philosophi multa consideraverunt de Sole aeterno; sed nihil eis valuit, quia non fuit Luna sub pedibus.”

<sup>352</sup> Ib. St. Bonaventure lists these as (1) consideratio corporalium naturarum, (2) spiritualium substantiarum, (3) intellectualium scientiarum, (4) affectualium virtutum, (5) institutarum divinitus legum, (6) infusarum divinitus gratiarum, (7) irrevocabilium judiciorum, (8) incomprehensibilium misericordiarum, (9) remunerabilium meritorum, (10) praemiantium praemiorum, (11) temporalium decursuum, (12) aeternalium rationum. If Dante, like his theological masters, insisted upon driving home every possible correspondence, he might have picked twelve of his “stars” to illustrate especially these several “considerations” crowning Dante’s faithful soul: as thus, (1) Albert, (2) Dionysius, (3) Anselm, (4) Bonaventure, (5) Gratian, (6) Solomon, (7) Thomas, (8) Sigier the saved heretic, (9) Boethius, (10) Bede?, (11) Joachim, (12) Richard.

<sup>353</sup> St. Bonaventure, *Sermo in die S. Pentecost.*, iii. In *Compend. theol. veritatis*, V, xxi, he conceives the mission of each apostle as concerning particularly one

and doctors of the Church.<sup>354</sup> If the "woman clothed with the Sun" is taken as Mary, the twelve stars would be the totality of the saints saved through her, or, more specifically, her twelve prerogatives, or—doubled to conform to the twenty-four elders—the patriarchs of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New.<sup>355</sup> Also, as "clothed with the Sun," Mary is not "naked,"—that is, not a disembodied spirit,—but clothed with the glorified body.<sup>356</sup>

Out of these various elements, as I conceive, Dante built up his independent image, or "sign." Beatrice, as faithful one of Mary, is presented in heaven "clothed with the Sun" of the glorified body, and crowned with the twelve stars doubled to represent the two schools of prophets illuminating the Church. So far as the first school, the Thomists, abides principally in faith of the mind, it has likeness with the spirit of the Old Testament,

article of faith. Similarly, Dante might so conceive his prophets, so far as twelve of them correspond to the apostles.

<sup>354</sup> Albert. Mag., op. cit. XII, vii, v, II.

<sup>355</sup> Ib. 9.

<sup>356</sup> Ib. 4-5. "Ecce qualiter assumpta, scilicet non nuda, id est, tantum in anima, sed amicta sole, id est, glorificato corpore."

whereas the second school, the Augustinians, abiding principally in charity of the will, has likeness with the spirit of the New. The triple crown would indicate for Beatrice—both as representative of the Church and as individual saved soul—(1) the *aurea* of essential reward, or perfecting of faith in knowledge, (2) the aureole of “doctor,” which she was for Dante, and (3) the glory of the new body, conceived as a second aureole.<sup>357</sup> Her aureole of “doctor” is in effect implied in the garland of olive, Minerva’s leaf, worn by her when she appeared to Dante in the Earthly Paradise.<sup>358</sup> “The oil of the olive signifies,” says Albert, “the oil of wisdom for instructing novices. With this oil are filled empty vessels (*IV Regum* iv, 4): for the valleys, that is, the humble shall abound in the grain of wisdom, of which is made the bread of life.”<sup>359</sup>

The garland of olive, indeed, can by itself symbolize the three aureoles merited severally by doctors, virgins, and martyrs. As its oil

<sup>357</sup> Cf. above, pp. 14-15.

<sup>358</sup> *Purg.* xxx, 31, 68.

<sup>359</sup> *Op. cit.* XII, vi, ii, 3. Like the Virgin, Beatrice is “umile ed alta più che creatura.” (*Par.* xxxiii, 2.) Dante calls the wisdom he has received from her “pan degli angeli.” (*Par.* ii, 11.)

signifies wisdom above sense, dower of doctors, and its "leaves" words of evangelical preaching, so its "foliage" (*coma*) is virginity to which is due the aureole.<sup>360</sup> Mary, of course, was recognized as virgin of virgins, and martyr of martyrs, but it may seem incongruous for Dante to attribute, however poetically, the aureoles of virginity and martyrdom to his lady married as she was and dying in her bed. Virgin he actually calls her, however:

"Ma poi che l'altre vergini dier loco  
A lei (*Beatrice*) di dir, etc." <sup>361</sup>

The olive, says Albert again, "has a bitter root," signifying that the just man should "refuse the kingdom of this world, and run to meet his crucifiers (*crucifixoribus suis*), that is, the tribulations of this world, and say with Lot, *Genes. xix, 19: Non possum in monte salvari.*"<sup>362</sup> Mary was a martyr, not in the body, but in the "spirit."<sup>363</sup> God, who scrutinizes the heart, may impute the merit of martyrdom to one in will faithful unto death, even if his faith be not actually

<sup>360</sup> Albert. Mag., loc. cit. I.

<sup>361</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii, 7-8.

<sup>362</sup> Loc. cit. 6.

<sup>363</sup> Albert. Mag., op. cit. III, xii, I.

brought to test. So St. Thomas rules, and accepts St. Lucia, whom Dante associates with Beatrice, as his authority.<sup>364</sup> At least, Beatrice was taken from this life in her young strength. Also, she voluntarily descended into hell to save Dante.

Finally, the threefold circle described about her, the "woman clothed with the Sun," is a "shadowy preface" of that other threefold circle to be seen by Dante in the Empyrean as symbol of the Trinity.<sup>365</sup> Like Mary, Beatrice is enwrapped or involved, as it were, immediately in the Godhead, or—to recur to Dante's earlier metaphor—she is the immediate product of which the sole factor is the divine Three, and so she is a Nine, number of miracle.<sup>366</sup>

So as Angelic Love, in the person of Gabriel, crowns Mary triumphant with his own circling glory,<sup>367</sup> all the illuminations of the Church, in the persons of doctors, saints, and angels, focus their circling glory upon Dante's lady to signify her miraculous likeness in quality, if not in degree, to the very

<sup>364</sup> *S. T.* II-II, cxxiv, 4, 2<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>365</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 115 et seq.

<sup>366</sup> *Vita Nuova*, xxix.

<sup>367</sup> *Par.* xxiii, 94 et seq.



Mother of God. Nowhere more audaciously and magnificently than in the implications of this, his canticle of the Sun, has Dante fulfilled his promise to say of her what never yet has been said of any woman.

## THE "THREE BLESSED LADIES" OF THE DIVINE COMEDY

"Però se il caldo Amor lo chiara Vista  
Della prima Virtù dispone e segna,  
Tutta la perfezion quivi s'acquista."

*Par. xiii, 79-81.*

When Virgil first offers escape from the Dark Wood by the roundabout way through Hell and Purgatory, Dante accepts at once with grateful relief. But as the night shadows gather, his resolution falters. What Virgil proposed had indeed been done by mortal men. Virgil's own hero, Aeneas, had descended into Hell; St. Paul had been caught up into the Third Heaven; and both had come back to earthly life. But, exclaimed Dante,

"Io non Enea, io non Paolo sono." <sup>1</sup>

Virgil meets this pusillanimous doubt <sup>2</sup> by assuring Dante that divine aid will be given. Indeed, as Virgil will tell the various

<sup>1</sup> *Inf. ii, 32.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ib. 43-48.*

warders of the lower world—Charon, Minos, Plutus, Chiron, Malacoda—and, more respectfully, Cato, guardian of the Mount, the journey is willed on high.<sup>3</sup> He himself is but the messenger and instrument of Beatrice. She in turn had been incited to aid Dante by Lucia; Lucia by the Virgin Mary.<sup>4</sup> Mary alone seems to have seen Dante's plight, and to have acted upon her own initiative. And in the field in which she saw and acted, that of the saving of a sinner, hers was the right of initiative. In the divine court, it was held, there are two jurisdictions,—one of justice, and one of mercy. Mary presides over the latter, and when she chooses to intervene, her decision is final.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it is only filial obedience for Christ to yield to his mother's will, especially in a case of mercy.<sup>6</sup> To save her

<sup>3</sup> *Inf.* iii, 95-96; v, 23-24; vii, 10-12; xii, 88-89; xxi, 79-83; *Purg.* i, 52-84.

<sup>4</sup> *Inf.* ii, 94-114.

<sup>5</sup> "Regnum Dei consistit in duobus, scilicet in misericordia et justitia: et filius Dei sibi quasi retinuit justitiam velut dimidiam partem regni, matri concessit misericordiam quasi dimidiam aliam partem." Albertus Magnus, *De laudibus b. Mariæ Virginis*, VI, xiii, 3.

<sup>6</sup> "Scio bene, quod post sententiam non est appellatio ad majorem: quia, et si judex sit homo tuus Filius, est tamen et Deus Filius Dei Patris. Non enim video, Domina, quomodo aliquid tibi valeat denegare, qui vult, ut per te

servants, she may not merely supplicate, but even maternally command her Son.<sup>7</sup>

The natural consequence of this extension of Mary's saving power was to make her the final arbiter of human fate. To gain her grace assured salvation; to lose it damnation. So St. Bernard advises Dante:

"Riguarda omai nella faccia ch'a Cristo  
Più si somiglia, chè la sua chiarezza  
Sola ti può disporre a veder Cristo." <sup>8</sup>

Fittingly, therefore, Dante's story of salvation starts with Mary's intervention in his mortal need, and ends with her securing for him in foretaste the final reward of beatitude. When Virgil rebukes Charon's natural reluc-

coelestem patriam habeamus. Hoc est enim quod cupit Deus noster; hoc est quod desiderat; hoc est pro quo te matrem constituit advocatam. Non ergo restat, Domina, nisi ut illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos convertas." St. Bonaventure, *Stimulus Amoris*, III, xix, fi.

<sup>7</sup> ". . . pro salute famulantium sibi, non solum potest Filio supplicare sicut alii sancti, sed etiam potest auctoritate materna eidem imperare." Albert. Mag., op. cit. II, i, 21. Cf. ib. III, xi.

<sup>8</sup> *Par.* xxxii, 85-87. Cf. *Par.* xxxiii, 13-15. Also, Albert. Mag., op. cit. XII, vi, xx, 19: ". . . nullus ad illam beatitudinem quae Christus est, praevallet intrare, nisi sit in conductu hujus virgae." Also, St. Bonaventure, *Psalterium majus b. Mar. Virg.*, Ps. 117: "Via veniendi ad Christum est appropinquare ad illam."

tance to ferry the living Dante, by declaring it willed on high, he means that Mary wills it. So Cato later recognizes:

" . . . se donna del ciel ti move e regge,  
Come tu di', non c'è mestier lusinghe:  
Bastiti ben che per lei ci richegge." <sup>9</sup>

Virgil had meant Beatrice, but she was sent by Mary. Moreover, St. Bernard applies to Mary the selfsame formula that Virgil had used with Charon and Minos. Virgil had said:

"Vuolsi così colà dove si puote  
Ciò che si vuole." <sup>10</sup>

St. Bernard says:

"Ancor ti prego, Regina che puoi  
Ciò che tu vuoi." <sup>11</sup>

Such verbal correspondences are in Dante's writings rarely accidental.

It is no mere poetic fancy, then, but soberly accepted faith for Dante to set the Virgin-Mother—so far as his, as everyman's, salvation is concerned—in the very place of the First Person of the Trinity, the Father

"Lo primo ed ineffabile Valore." <sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Purg.* i, 91-93.

<sup>10</sup> *Inf.* iii, 94-96; v, 23-24.

<sup>11</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 34-35.

<sup>12</sup> *Par.* x, 3.

In Dante's presentation, she is, like God the Father, immobile.<sup>13</sup> Unlike the miracle-working visitant of popular legend, she performs her acts of mercy vicariously. Regally, as befitting the Queen of Heaven and Empress of the Celestial, Terrestrial, and Infernal Kingdoms,<sup>14</sup> she summons Lucia to her presence, and briefly commends the distressed Dante to her care:

"Questa chiese Lucia in suo dimando  
E disse: 'Or ha bisogno il tuo fedele  
Di te, ed io a te lo raccomando'." <sup>15</sup>

Then, apparently, Mary does nothing more about it. Execution of her merciful providence is left to her agents, Lucia and Beatrice. She herself remains hieratically aloof in her heaven, watchful perhaps, but personally, it would seem, inactive. Thus, at first sight, there appears a certain analogy between her dramatic function in the *Divine Comedy* and that of Gloriana in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. So Gloriana sends forth the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T. I*, lxxv, 1, 1<sup>m</sup>: ". . . quanto creaturae magis appropinquant ad Deum, qui est immobilis, tanto magis sunt immobiles."

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Albert. Mag., op. cit. IV, vi, 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Inf.* ii, 97-99.

various knights upon their missions of mercy and justice, herself meanwhile serenely and inactively awaiting the result. Manifestly, she in her castle can keep no liaison with her wandering champions. At most, she can but supply them with a continuing motive to prowess,—the promised reward of her favor. But she cannot help them at need. She cannot even know where they are. Everything that may happen between their setting out and their coming back is for her a blank. She can only hope, and—if compatible with her regal dignity—pray for them. Allegorically indeed, the case is different. By historical intention, Spenser, as he explained to Raleigh, meant by Gloriana, Queen Elizabeth. In the national campaigns, military and other, which the quests of the several knights signify, the English Queen might maintain liaison with her armies and representatives, and so act in their support. Again, since by moral and anagogical intention, Gloriana signifies Glory, there is possible a still more intimate liaison. For Spenser appears to intend by Gloriana as Glory a divine power as well as a personified ideal. The ideal is the reward of glory, temporal or eternal or both. This signification, however, only moralizes the literal motive of

the feudal queen's favor. But Glory conceived as the personal power, the radiant activity, of God, would identify Gloriana exactly with the divine power which Dante also calls "glory."

"La gloria di colui che tutto move  
Per l'universo penetra, e risplende  
In una parte più, e meno altrove" <sup>16</sup>

As that Glory, Gloriana is spiritually and efficiently in liaison with her champions always. All their strength is from her. They are but the instruments through which her power continuously effects itself. If failure follow, it is because the instrument, not the power, is defective.

Although Spenser's religious allegory teaches this fundamental thesis of Christian providence, his carrying literal story is in imperfect correspondence. The Faerie Queene of his chivalric fiction contributes nothing to the action beyond the initial motive to service. She is an inspiration to the enamored Prince Arthur, no doubt, but only an absentee inspiration, availing him only as the thought of a sweetheart at home might avail a soldier in the field. And potent as such inspiration

<sup>16</sup> *Par.* i, 1-3.



can be, it certainly offers but imperfect analogy to the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent sustaining of God.

Between the literal and allegorical rôle of the Virgin Mary in the *Divine Comedy* there is no such disparity. Indeed, so far as the character of Mary is concerned, there is, so far as I can see, no question or need of allegorization. Dante merely voices contemporary belief, as defined by leading theological writers, when he attributes to the enthroned Mother of God effective control of human destiny. Whatever comes to us must have passed through her hands.<sup>17</sup> She is accredited with an "omnipotence" coequal with Christ's; "for she is queen of that kingdom of which her Son is king, and king and queen enjoy the same prerogatives under the law." "Yet most excellently potent is she in the Church Triumphant,"—in the jurisdiction, that is, of man's salvation. In that jurisdiction, she is made to declare: "Mine is the power . . . to act as I see fit (*ad beneplacitum meum*), and to admit whom I will."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "Nihil nos Deus habere voluit, quod per Mariae manus non transiret." St. Bernard, in *Vig. Nat. Dom.*, quoted by St. Bonaventure, *Speculum b. Mar. Virg.*, lect. iv.

<sup>18</sup> Albert. Mag., op. cit. IV, xxx (*De omnipotentia Mariae*), 1.

The Mary of the *Divine Comedy* is often described as the "symbol of God's mercy." She is not that, but very God over man. Nor is her divine rôle merely one of mercy. She can be an "iron rod" to chastise the obdurate.<sup>19</sup> Effectively, therefore, the Virgin's favor is the one and supreme object of man's solicitude and solicitation. Homage may be dutifully paid to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Indeed, not to pay it would offend Mary herself. But the Trinity, like the home-abiding Faerie Queene, becomes for the harrassed Christian, practically an absentee inspiration. So Bonaventure changes to Mary's address the supplicatory psalm:

"In te, Domina, speravi, non confundar in aeternum: in gratia tua suscipe me.

Tu es fortitudo mea et refugium meum: consolatio mea et protectio mea.

Ad te, Domina, clamavi, dum tribularetur cor meum: et exaudisti me de vertice collium aeternorum.

Educas me de laqueo, quem absconderunt mihi: quoniam tu es adjutrix mea.

<sup>19</sup> "Virgo Maria est virga ferrea daemonibus et incorrigibilibus." St. Bonaventure, *Spec. b. Mar. Virg.*, lect. xii. He also addresses her as "O vere peccaminum vere draconina." *Carm. super cantic. Salve Regina*, prin°.

In manus tuas, Domina, commendo spiritum meum: totam vitam meam et diem ultimum meum. Gloria Patri, etc." <sup>20</sup>

In the precise spirit of this converted psalm Dante represents his own rescue. "From the top of the eternal hills," Mary had seen and heard him lamenting in the "snare" of the dark monster-haunted wood. His rescuer is no mere allegorical symbol of an act of God, but a real person,—a living, acting, all-seeing, all-wise, and all-powerful divinity. Such was the faith of the age.

As soon as Dante, however, comes to dramatize Mary's ways and means of intervention, allegory would seem to begin. The curious way by which her aid is transmitted—almost as if through "military channels"—by Lucia to Beatrice, by Beatrice to Virgil, by Virgil to Dante himself, is of course dramatic fiction and allegory. But the precise signification is puzzling. Various interpretations have been offered by commentators, but the most currently accepted view is that summarized as follows by Professor Grandgent: "God in his mercy sends forth his illuminating grace to prepare the way for complete revelation, which will ensue as soon as the reawakened

<sup>20</sup> *Psalt. majus b. Mar. Virg.*, Ps. 30.

voice of reason shall have made the sinner ready to receive it." <sup>21</sup>

This is an admirably clear and simple statement of the case. It represents truthfully, as I believe, the standard interpretation of the opening action of the poem. Of the "three ladies," the Virgin, "as generally in Christian thought, symbolizes divine Mercy;" Lucia is "the emblem of Grace—probably, as her name suggests, Illuminating Grace;" Beatrice "stands for Revelation, for which Dante's distorted mind must be prepared by Reason,"—that is, Virgil.

Now is this what Dante means? I ask the question in some embarrassment; for I realize that against the consensus of scholarly opinion a lonely dissenter is certainly presumptuous and probably wrong. Still, the long chance is the interesting one. And besides, honestly I do not think this is what Dante means.

In the first place, the theological implication of the quoted interpretation is that God executes his own providence. The three ladies merely symbolize the three aspects of his executive act. But this is false to Dante's

<sup>21</sup> *La Divina Commedia*, ed. and annot. by C. H. Grandgent, Heath & Co., 1913, p. 19.

theology. In that, God knows and wills his providential plan, but deutes the execution of it to second causes, "intellectual creatures," in a descending scale.<sup>22</sup> The Virgin, St. Lucia, Beatrice, Virgil constitute such a descending scale of "intellectual creatures," who Dante says did personally influence him for good in the degree and kind of their respective illuminations. With regard to the Virgin there can be no question. Day and night, he says, he invoked her name.<sup>23</sup> So to do was the bounden duty and the ground of hope of every good Catholic. Dante's dependence on the actual St. Lucia is more doubtful. He may have invoked her to cure his pooreyesight. At least, such healing-power was accredited to her. He may have invoked her aid in more spiritual issues. But the suspicion arises that her personal prominence in the story of his redemption is due rather to the derivation of her name from *luce*, light, and the neat way this signification fitted in with her healing-power, especially if this power were conceived to extend to spiritual vision as well as to physical. For light is the

<sup>22</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T. I*, xxii, 13. Cf. *Ib.* ciii, 6; *Contra Gent.* III, lxxvi-lxxix.

<sup>23</sup> *Par.* xxiii, 88-90.

natural aid to vision. If this suspicion be well grounded, undoubtedly the character of Lucia is from the outset preponderantly symbolic. In other words, the living saint's personality has been merged into its special virtue, and the virtue itself reduced to its theoretic principle. The actual light-giver to the dim of sight becomes the symbol of Light itself, physical and spiritual. If Beatrice, on the other hand, was to and for Dante what he says she was, then on earth and from heaven her influence upon him was concretely personal. *She* helped him, not something else she might "stand for." Even if Dante invented her, he invented her as a personality, and not as a personification. But in her immortal personality, as in any living spiritual organism, there would be a hierarchy of powers, with one supreme and controlling power, one that gave form and direction to all the rest. To say that by such a dominant power, or characteristic, she influenced Dante, is not to treat it in abstraction from the powers over which it was dominant. A rudder steers a ship, but a rudder cannot steer without a ship. Yet, although the actual Beatrice influenced Dante from heaven, her individual influence could not, like Mary's, be repre-

sented as universal. It would have been insanity of praise to set up his lady, however glorious among women, as a divinity regulating all mankind. She herself had promised:

"Sarai meco senza fine cive  
Di quella Roma onde Cristo è Romano." <sup>24</sup>

She too was but a private citizen in the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, to make his redemption through her serviceable as an example to his fellow-men, he must, so to speak, de-individualize her, reveal to them what power, incarnate in her, was in itself universally salutary. In fine, Beatrice becomes a symbol, not for Dante's rescue, but for the rescue of mankind. There remains Virgil. An obvious distinction between his case and that of the three ladies is that they are in heaven, and Virgil in hell. The mere fact of being damned, however, would not make Virgil's actual spirit ineligible as an instrument of God for man's benefit.<sup>25</sup> And it would be hazardous to deny categorically that one of Dante's time and faith might not have entertained the idea of actual supernatural aid from his beloved master's spirit.

<sup>24</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 101-102.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxii, 5-6.

Was not he, Dante, admitted sixth in that "fair school" of which Virgil was master? <sup>26</sup> But I do not insist upon the point. At least, the spirit of Virgil lived and spoke to Dante in immortal poetry, in that "right speaking," upon which, as honoring him and all that heard him, Beatrice relied for Dante's moral correction.<sup>27</sup> Such an influence is neither allegory nor fiction. And there can be no doubt that Dante was deeply stirred by the noble character, the humane wisdom and sweet reasonableness of Virgil as revealed in his writings. These qualities appear in the character of the *Comedy*. Dante's Virgil is no mere symbol of Reason in the abstract; he is—in the richest sense—an "all-round man,"—one, that is, whose whole character is true-centered on reason. Indeed, as will be argued more fully hereafter,<sup>28</sup> Virgil's efficacy is more than that of natural reason. Otherwise he could not lead Dante to Beatrice, could not, in fact, get out of Limbo.

Thus, as it seems to me, the standard interpretation I have quoted, errs in attributing to God a direct action which according to Catho-

<sup>26</sup> *Inf.* iv, 100-102.

<sup>27</sup> *Inf.* ii, 112-114.

<sup>28</sup> Below, pp. 186 et seq.



lic theology he does not exercise, in ignoring the all-dominant divinity of the Virgin, and in impoverishing the rôles especially of Beatrice and Virgil. Even Lucia, I think, has a richer and more complex signification than merely and statically that of "Illuminating Grace."

But another kind of objection seems to lie against the standard interpretation. It does not work out right. We are justified in expecting from a writer so meticulously scrupulous as Dante an exact correspondence between the literal narrative and the symbolic implication. But if "God in his mercy sends forth his illuminating grace to prepare the way for complete revelation," surely the proper recipient of grace is the sinner, Dante. In point of fact, Lucia, or Illuminating Grace, does not at this time go out to Dante at all, but to Beatrice. And if "Beatrice stands for Revelation," in what sense can Revelation receive illuminating grace? Would it not be "carrying coals to Newcastle?" Then Beatrice descends to Virgil in hell. But if Virgil receives revelation, how can Virgil stand for Reason-without-revelation? Once more, if Beatrice signifies the "complete revelation which will ensue as soon as the reawakened

voice of reason shall have made the sinner ready to receive it," how happens it that the final rapture of revelation comes to Dante when Beatrice is no longer with him?

Now I hope I have made it clear that I am impugning not the personal interpretation of a particular scholar, but the standard interpretation, the interpretation given in nearly all the current commentaries. And I have the temerity to believe it possible to put finger on the principal point where this standard interpretation goes astray. It is perfectly true that the Christian has two sources of knowledge, to wit, his own faculty of reason and revelation through Christ. It is true also that in the sinner's mind reason is dethroned, or at least corrupted, and that by such a mind revelation would be misunderstood and perverted. As the elder Guido had said:

"The sun shines on the mud all day; and it  
Still mud remains,—nor is the sun's power less."

It follows then that the sinner's "distorted mind" must be "prepared—or rather repaired—for revelation" by the re-enthronement of reason. So Virgil, as Reason, aided by Lucia as Illuminating Grace, prepares Dante's mind to receive Beatrice. It seems to follow,

therefore, that Beatrice must be Revelation.

And it might follow if Dante's reception of Beatrice, his spiritual possession of her, were the consummating end. But it is not. She even warns him against such an idea:

"Che non pur ne'miei occhi è Paradiso." <sup>29</sup>

The true consummating end is God's own self-revelation to a mind prepared to receive the "*fulgore*," the effulgence, of that overwhelming illumination.<sup>30</sup> Beatrice is for Dante a means to that end, an instrument of God's in the execution of that providential plan. No doubt she was the instrument of grace that touched him most nearly, but her very influence over him was due to the focussing in her of all the lights of heaven, which are also God's instruments. The resulting splendor of her beauty, physical and spiritual, awoke in him love of her. Then the recognition that this her splendor was the radiated reflection of still diviner beings, of the saints, and of the angels above the saints, and of the Virgin above the angels, and of the Godhead above the Virgin, enlarged at last his love of her to

<sup>29</sup> *Par.* xviii, 21. Cf. *Par.* xxiii, 70-72.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Par.* xxxiii, 140-142.

love of God.<sup>31</sup> And to this love of God, this charity, so made perfect in Dante himself, is due the rewarding revelation of God, beatitude—by him foretasted. For the one thing essential to beatitude is perfect charity.<sup>32</sup>

Beatrice's training, then, is a training in charity. But how? She herself implies the answer:

“Nè impetrare spirazion mi valse,  
Con le quali ed in sogno ed altrimenti  
Lo rivocai; sì poco a lui ne calse.  
Tanto giù cadde che tutti argomenti  
Alla salute sua eran già corti,  
Fuor che mostrargli le perdute genti ”<sup>33</sup>

Her earlier “revelations” had failed of their purpose; her later ones—of the “lost folk”—sufficed for his rescue. And then, after he had paid his “scot of penitence that sheddeth tears,”<sup>34</sup> had passed through purgatory, and crossed Lethe, he received the progressive revelations of the blest folk which culminated in the revelation of God himself.

I might appear to be throwing away my case. If Beatrice's training was by successive

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Purg.* xxxi, 22-27.

<sup>32</sup> “Perfectio charitatis est essentialis beatitudini.”  
St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, iv, 8, 3<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> *Purg.* xxx, 133-138.

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.* 142-145.

"revelations," is not her symbolic function revelation? And is not the standard interpretation therefore right? Yet, let us consider a little more closely.

In the first place, she says that she "obtained" revelations, not *gave* them. The revelation itself did not come from any power of hers. Would it not, then, be a singular conception of symbolism which should make her represent a power which she had not? In the second place, I have been using the term "revelation,"—as I think the majority of commentators use it,—in a loose and untechnical way. But Dante never uses philosophical and theological terms in a loose and untechnical way. And "revelation" in the technical theological sense is carefully defined by his master, St. Thomas. "A revelation includes a vision, and not conversely; for whenever things are seen, the intelligence and signification of which are obscure to the seer, then it is a vision only, such as was the vision of Pharaoh and Nebuchednezzar, . . . but when together with the vision is had the signification and intelligence of those things which are seen, this is revelation."<sup>35</sup> There

<sup>35</sup> "Revelatio includit visionem et non e converso; nam aliquando videntur aliqua, quorum intellectus et signifi-

are, accordingly, two factors in any genuine revelation,—(1) the vision or inspiration given, and (2) understanding of it by the recipient. The earlier visions and inspirations obtained for Dante by Beatrice,—those narrated in the *New Life*,—were not obscure or defective in themselves. If they had been, her rebuke would have been unjust. The defect was in him, in his power of understanding. Indeed, later, under analogous circumstances, she tells him so.<sup>36</sup> So, if the later visions,—those recounted in the *Divine Comedy*,—proved, as they did, to be efficacious, to be genuine revelations, it must be because Dante himself had become enabled to interpret them. His faculty of understanding must have been improved. That improvement was her work. Of her own power she could not produce the vision, the first factor of revelation; but it was her power that actualized the second factor, his power to comprehend, and so to profit by, the vision. And this, in fact, he acknowledges to be the

catio est occulta videnti, et tunc est visio solum, sicut fuit visio Pharaonis et Nabuchodonosor, . . . sed quando cum visione habetur significatio et intellectus eorum, quae videntur, hunc est revelatio." *II Cor.* xii, 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii, 64-75.

very sum and substance of his obligation to her. In his last solemn words to her, he says:

"Di tante cose quante io ho vedute,  
Dal tuo potere e dalla tua bontate  
Riconosco la grazia e la virtute."<sup>37</sup>

Or, more briefly, he owes the efficacy of his visions to her power.

The conclusion seems to me unescapable. The power or virtue which Beatrice exerts for Dante's good, and which—taken in itself as universally salutary—she symbolizes, is not Revelation, but one that, communicated, can by understanding transform visions, "things seen," *into* revelation. To miss this distinction, to confuse this power with Revelation, is like confusing the steam with the engine. What then is this power?

There are two ways of answering this question,—one by the theological necessity of the case, the other from intimations and implications of Dante's own text. Naturally, both ways should lead to the same result; and it might be considered more natural and more final to enquire what he means from what he says than to force—perhaps—his words into conformity with any theological

<sup>37</sup> *Par.* xxxi, 82–84.

dogma. But Dante is an economist—in the theological sense—of truth. He writes “*ad utilitatem*,” saying in effect to his reader what Love in the vision of the New Life had said to him: “*Non domandar più che utile ti sia.*”<sup>38</sup> He omits to label his symbolic characters and meanings, because so to do would have been, not only useless, but even worse than useless. Bunyan could for the convenience of his readers, label his characters as “Christian,” “Hopeful,” “Giant Despair,” “Mr. Worldly-wiseman,” and so forth, because, like Wordsworth’s primrose, these characters were what their labels said they were, and they were nothing more. But, as has been shown, to tie a label to the characters of the *Divine Comedy*, especially the principal ones, would actually mislead. Their symbolic significations follow from their respective functions in a highly complex system of ideas. Really to understand them, the reader must first understand this system. So, lest the incompetent reader may be misled into thinking he understands when he cannot, Dante deliberately veils his deeper meanings by insinuating them enigmatically. It is the avowed practice of medieval theolo-

<sup>38</sup> xii, 40-41.



gians when addressing intellectually mixed audiences. The experts can read the riddles; the others are mercifully and prudently spared mischievous misunderstandings. Safely to read Dante's enigmas, therefore, we must, as best we may, take the approach of the philosophical and theological expert.

Now theologically speaking, there are two resources given to man for interpreting the "intelligence and signification" of "things seen." One is by the "use of reason;" the other, "through a certain connaturalness with the things to be judged." Both are called wisdom; but the wisdom acquired by the use of reason proceeds discursively from the data of sense, and is therefore of itself incompetent to judge of divine things, which are beyond sense. The wisdom, on the other hand, which proceeds from connaturalness with divine things is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is not acquired, but infused. And its procedure is not by discursive inference, but by a "divine," and therefore infallible, "instinct." Moreover, if this divine gift of wisdom has its essence in the intellect, or faculty of judgment, it has its cause in the will, to wit, in charity.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> ". . . rectitudo autem iudicii potest contingere

The visions and inspirations obtained by Beatrice for Dante were of "divine things." His judgment of them had three stages: (1) by imperfect use of reason,—his rational faculty being impeded by passion; (2) by perfect use of reason,—symbolized by the guidance of Virgil aided by divine light, or gratuitous grace;<sup>40</sup> (3) by the "divine instinct," or intuition, of the *gift* of wisdom, vouchsafed to all who have charity, and symbolized by the personal guidance of Beatrice. The symbolic distinction, then, between Virgil and Beatrice is not between Reason and Revelation, but between Reason human-

*duplicitur*: uno modo secundum perfectum usum rationis: alio modo propter connaturalitatem quamdam ad ea, de quibus jam est judicandum, . . . sic ergo circa res divinas ex rationis inquisitione rectum judicium habere pertinet ad sapientiam, qui est virtus intellectualis: sed rectum judicium habere de eis secundum quamdam connaturalitatem ad ipsas, pertinet ad sapientiam, secundum quod donum est Spiritus Sancti. . . . Sic ergo sapientia, quae est donum, causam quidem habet in voluntate, scilicet charitatem, sed essentiam habet in intellectu, cujus actus est recte judicare." St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlv, 2, c. Again, ". . . sapientia dicitur *intellectualis virtus*, secundum quod procedit ex judicio rationis: dicitur autem donum, secundum quod operatur ex instinctu divino." *Ib.* I-II, lxviii, 1, 4<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> The need and character of this grace will be discussed hereafter. See below, pp. 186-193.

ly perfected in "acquired Wisdom" (*Sapientia adquisita*) and Reason divinely perfected in "infused Wisdom" (*Sapientia infusa*).<sup>41</sup> The former reaches beyond the things of sense only by abstraction and discursive logic; the latter has intuitive cognizance of divine things by a "certain connaturalness" with them.

As St. Thomas states,<sup>42</sup> the *essence* of this infused wisdom, of wisdom as a gift, is in the intellect; its *cause* is in the will,—that is, in charity. In other words, infused wisdom is of an intellect actualized by charity,—or, more briefly still, of an intellect of love. Such, then, is the deeper meaning of the famous opening address of the canzone:

"Donne, ch'avete intelletto d'amore,"

"Ye ladies—or more generally, spirits—that have the intellect of love."<sup>43</sup> Also is explained how and why in the responsive canzone put into their mouths, they, like Dante, acknowledge that their infused wisdom is due to Beatrice's influence. She, as they say, is "*la*

<sup>41</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlv, 1, 2<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> See above, note 39.

<sup>43</sup> The more usual translation, "intelligence of love," will serve if "intelligence" is understood in the active sense of the faculty of intelligence.

*fontana d'insegnamento*,"<sup>44</sup> which "*di noi ciascuna fa saccente*."<sup>45</sup> And in view of his faithful service, they promise Dante to intercede for him with Love,<sup>46</sup> and to recommend him to Love.<sup>47</sup>

The deeper insight of an intellect actualized by love is explicitly alluded to by Beatrice herself in reference to the mystery of God's sacrifice for man:

"Questo decreto, frate, sta sepulto  
 Agli occhi di ciascuno il cui ingegno  
 Nella fiamma d'amor non è adulto."<sup>48</sup>

And Dante's definition of the nature of his poetic inspiration is made in direct conjunction with the line of the canzone quoted by Bonagiunta:

"Ma di's'io veggio qui colui che fuore  
 Trasse le nuove rime, cominciando:  
 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'Amore.'  
 Ed io a lui: 'Io mi son un che, quando

<sup>44</sup> Canz. *Ben-aggia-l'amoroso*, ll. 64-65. The author of this canzone, whether Dante or not, certainly understood Dante.

<sup>45</sup> *Ib.* l. 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ib.* ll. 25-28.

<sup>47</sup> *Ib.* ll. 69-70.

<sup>48</sup> *Par.* vii, 58-60.

Amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo  
Che ditta dentro, vo significando.' " 49

His poetry was due to his intellect having become an "*intelletto d'amore*," operating by "divine instinct." It will be remembered that his tongue spoke the line, "*Donne ch'avete intelletto d'Amore*," "*quasi come per se stessa mossa*." 50

The ladies of the responsive canzone promised to recommend the faithful Dante to "Love." They must mean Beatrice herself, since she alone could reward her servant. Also, in the *New Life*, Love himself, personified, announced the virtual identity of Beatrice and himself: "*Chi volesse sottilmente considerare, quella Beatrice chiamerebbe AMORE, per molta simiglianza che ha meco*." 51 Here, and constantly also in the *Divine Comedy*, Beatrice would represent, or symbolize, Love,—that is, the holy love which is charity. I have just seemingly demonstrated, on the other hand, that she symbolizes the Intellect of Love. The ambiguity is a matter of two facets of one crystal, two aspects of a concrete, and therefore multiple, symbol. It

49 *Purg.* xxiv, 49-54.

50 *V. N.* xix, 10-12.

51 *V. N.* xxiv, 41-43.

depends upon whether we are regarding Beatrice's "power" in its *cause*, or in its *essence*. As cause of the gift of wisdom, she is the will of charity; as its essence, the intellect of charity. Either involves the other; since the effect must follow its cause, and whatever of perfection is in the effect must be in the cause.<sup>52</sup>

The efficacy of Beatrice as Love was to kindle a like love in Dante.<sup>53</sup> And at first this normal effect followed.<sup>54</sup> But because he yielded to baser desires, connaturalness was lost between his love and the Love she represented.<sup>55</sup> So, losing charity, he lost the "divine instinct" to interpret his saving inspirations, and went from bad to worse. Yet in the renouncement of his desired reward of her salutation, charity was re-kindled, and a "new and nobler" chapter in his young life opened.<sup>56</sup> For charity gives and

<sup>52</sup> ". . . quidquid perfectionis est in effectu, oportet invenire in causa effectiva." St. Thomas, *S. T. I*, iv, 2, c.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Albert. Mag. op. cit. IV, xvii, 1: ". . . est enim amor amantis et amati quasi quaedam unio potissimum in bonis, et naturaliter illud quod amatur, in sui naturam suum convertit amatorem."

<sup>54</sup> *V. N.* xi, 1-9.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *V. N.* xii, 26-41.

<sup>56</sup> *Ib.* xvii-xviii.

asks not, and would rather love than be loved.<sup>57</sup> The process repeats itself in his later falling away with the "compassionate lady" and subsequent repentance, until at last his thought rises to Beatrice in heaven, moved by a "new Intelligence" which Love infuses.<sup>58</sup> This new intelligence, caused by love,—or intellect of love,—is potentially capable of comprehending the divine things which Beatrice may tell or show him. As yet, however, it is weak, as his new-born charity is incipient only.<sup>59</sup> To develop his new insight he must "study,"<sup>60</sup> that is, meditate upon divine things—things connatural with her.<sup>61</sup> The beauty of these increases his charity, and increased charity strengthens his intellect. This reciprocal process is the spiritual dialectic of the *Paradise*.

In the *Divine Comedy*, the power of Beatrice is from the beginning recognized as love.

<sup>57</sup> "Charitas est amor gratuitus, qui dat et non accipit." St. Bonaventure, I *Sent.* v, 1, 1, dub. 9. ". . . magis pertinet ad charitatem velle amare, quam velle amari." St. Thomas, S. T. II-II, xxvii, 1, 2<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> V. N. xlii, 47-50.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. ib. 22-36, 55-60.

<sup>60</sup> Ib. xliii, 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *Opus* iv, c°. 3: "Ad acquirendam charitatem, necessaria sunt duo: scilicet auditio verbi Dei, et meditatio donorum ejus."

Love, she tells Virgil, moved her to descend into hell for Dante's sake.<sup>62</sup> In his reply, Virgil addresses her:

"O donna di virtù, sola per cui  
L'umana spezie eccede ogni contento  
Da quel ciel che ha minor li cerchi sui."<sup>63</sup>

This address is tantamount to calling Beatrice Love; for love of God, or charity, is the virtue by which the human race is exalted to the Empyrean.<sup>64</sup> And presently Lucia reënforces the point by calling Beatrice "*loda di Dio vera*."<sup>65</sup> "True praise of God" is charity, love of God. Perfectly to rejoice in God, says St. Bonaventure, is to love him in our hearts, to praise him with our lips, and to bear witness to him in our works. But, as Christ said, the fulfilment of all rejoicing is to love God. The rejoicing of the loving heart is the root, of which the rejoicing of the lips and the rejoicing by works are the branches.<sup>66</sup> Again, of all creatures, the

<sup>62</sup> *Inf.* ii, 72.

<sup>63</sup> *Ib.* 76-78.

<sup>64</sup> "Perfectio charitatis est essentialis beatitudini." St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, iv, 8, 3<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> *Inf.* ii, 103.

<sup>66</sup> "Et ideo est notandum, quod triplex est gaudium, scilicet primum, quo laetamur in corde; secundum, quo



Seraphim, interpreted as the "burning in love," <sup>67</sup> most intimately praise God. Furthermore, this identification of Beatrice with Love is confirmed by Lucia's further words:

"Chè non soccorri quei che t'amò tanto  
Che uscìo per te della volgare schiera?" <sup>68</sup>

For the "vulgar" is the opposite of the "gentle," and, as Dante has everywhere argued, that which makes the heart "gentle" is love.

"Amore e'l cor gentil sono una cosa." <sup>69</sup>

laetamur in ore; tertium, quo laetamur in opere. Nam gaudium cordis est Deum gaudendo amare; gaudium oris est Deum gaudendo laudare; gaudium vero operis est Deo gaudendo servire. Dico, quod primum gaudium, quo in hac die sancta gaudere debemus, est gaudium cordis: quo nihil aliud existit, quam Deum amare cum laetitia mentis. Unde Dominus volens Apostolos ad amorem inducere, post multa dulcia verba, quae eis dixerat, sic ait ad eos: "'Haec locutus sum vobis, ut gaudium vestrum plenum sit,' id est, ut amor vester ad profectum veniat, toto corde, et tota mente, omnique virtute Deum diligatis . . . sic existente puro et sancto hoc gaudio cordis, purum et sanctum erit gaudium oris, et operis, quia, secundum Apostolum, qualis radix, tales et rami." *Sermones de sanctis in communi*, XXXIV. Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xxviii, 1, 3<sup>m</sup>: "Gaudium de Deo, in se est effectus charitatis."

<sup>67</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *Cont. Gent.* III, lxxx.

<sup>68</sup> *Inf.* ii, 104-105.

<sup>69</sup> *V. N.* xx, 13.

Over and over Dante repeats it in ever new connections. God is Love; Beatrice is Love; therefore she, drawing him to herself, thereby draws him to God. She declares it:

“Per entro i miei disiri,  
Che ti menavano ad amar lo bene  
Di là dal qual non è a che si aspiri,” etc.<sup>70</sup>

He implies it:

“Poscia che contro alla vita presente  
Dei miseri mortali aperse il vero  
Quella che imparadisa la mia mente,—<sup>71</sup>  
Come in lo specchio fiamma di doppiero  
Vede colui che se n'alluma retro,  
Prima che l'abbia in vista o in pensiero,  
E sè rivolge per veder se il vetro  
Gli dice il vero, e vede ch'el s'accorda  
Con esso, come nota con suo metro,—  
Così la mia memoria si ricorda  
Ch'io feci, riguardando nei begli occhi  
Onde a pigliarmi fece Amor la corda.”<sup>72</sup>

That is, she, Love, used the beauty of her eyes to draw him to God, who, as Divine

<sup>70</sup> *Purg.* xxxi, 22-24.

<sup>71</sup> With this line, cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxv, 5 c.: “Charitas facit homines deiformes, supra homines conversari in coelis, et convenire cum Deo et cum angelis.” Dante himself describes heaven as “deiforme.” *Par.* ii, 20.

<sup>72</sup> *Par.* xxviii, 1-12.

Love's radiant point, is now visibly mirrored in her eyes.<sup>73</sup> Her first instrument, Virgil or Reason, in effect syllogizes her identity with sacred Love. Free choice is given to man between his loves, sacred and profane.

"Quest' è il principio, là onde si piglia  
Ragion di meritare in voi, secondo  
Che buoni e rei amori accoglie e viglia."<sup>74</sup>

So choice and following of sacred love is the "ground of merit" by which man attains beatitude. After perilous dalliance with profane loves, seduced by "present things with their false pleasure,"<sup>75</sup> Dante finally chose Beatrice, and is now following her securely<sup>76</sup> towards beatitude. Therefore, she whom he has chosen and follows, is, or represents, sacred love. Virgil, limited to discursive reasoning, can only infer; Bernard, Beatrice's second and final instrument, Contemplation in the highest grade,<sup>77</sup> recognizes and openly declares the identity:

"Acciò che tu assommi  
Perfettamente," disse, "il tuo cammino,

<sup>73</sup> Ib. 13 et seq.

<sup>74</sup> *Purg.* xviii, 64-66. Cf. *Purg.* xvii, 103-105.

<sup>75</sup> *Purg.* xxxi, 34-35.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Par.* xxv, 52-54.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxx, 4, 3<sup>m</sup>: ". . . sex designantur gradus, quibus per creaturas in Dei contem-

A che prego ed amor santo mandommi,  
 Vola con gli occhi per questo giardino;  
 Chè veder lui t'acconcerà lo sguardo  
 Più al montar per lo raggio divino." <sup>78</sup>

Beatrice, that is, "*amor santo*," "sacred love," sent him. In the second tercet is again illustrated how, looking on the beauteous flowers in the garden of heaven, Dante will kindle to greater love, and greater love the more will sharpen his spiritual sight.

Again, I may outline, as briefly as may be, a longer and more complicated chain of evidence towards the symbolic identity of Beatrice and Charity. Following the sacred Love which is Beatrice, Dante even in this life reaches to a momentary foretaste of beatitude. Like St. Paul, he is "caught up to the third heaven," and there sees God "face to face." But although his human faculty is incapable of retaining, still less of communi-

plationem ascenditur. . . . In *sexto* gradu ponitur consideratio intelligibilium, quae ratio nec invenire, nec capere potest; quae scilicet pertinent ad sublimem contemplationem divinae veritatis, in qua finaliter contemplatio perficitur." St. Thomas is avowedly following Richard of St. Victor, whom Dante later describes as "a considerar . . . più che viro," (*Par.* x, 132), and in *Epist.* x cites together with St. Bernard to justify his own miraculous rapture.

<sup>78</sup> *Par.* xxxi, 94-99.

cating, this wholly supersensuous knowledge, yet he does know, after his spirit has re-descended to earth, that his human will is wholly conformed to God's will, and has chosen forever the sacred Love which is of God, and of which Beatrice is reflection and likeness.<sup>79</sup> As Bonaventure said, this Love of God and from God which is charity "gives and asks not." Possessing it, or rather possessed by it, Dante is drawn down from his contemplative rapture to active service. For to suspend contemplation to save others belongs to the highest perfection of charity.<sup>80</sup> Like Paul, he becomes an apostle to men of the love with which he, like Beatrice, has become one. The *Divine Comedy*, lesson and example of how man is saved by love, is the message of his apostleship, and—because Beatrice is Love—its preachment of love is also praise of her. So preaching, he was fulfilling her dictate:

"Tu nota; e sì come da me son porte,  
Così queste parole segna ai vivi  
Del viver ch'è un corre e alla morte."<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 140-145.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxxii, 1, c, —3<sup>m</sup>.—III *Sent.* xxxv, 1, 4, 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii, 52-54.

And he himself now knows that her dictate and the continuing dictation of Love in his own mind are one and the same:

"Io mi son un che, quando  
Amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo  
Che ditta dentro, vo significando." <sup>82</sup>

Moreover, his following of Love's dictation is authorized by the first and right vicar of Christ. <sup>83</sup>

In the retrospect, also, enigmatic sayings are made clear. Virgil's warning at the beginning, that Dante may not ascend the "delectable mount" by the direct way holds true for him now that he is redeemed even as it did for him a sinner, though in a different spirit. For the virtuous man, the direct way is by the contemplative life. <sup>84</sup> But so far as one is wholly absorbed in contemplation, he may neglect the temporal needs of others. So the

<sup>82</sup> *Purg.* xxiv, 52-54. The like numbering of the two tercets—52-54 in their cantos—may be noted. It is possible that, as Miss Ruth Phelps has pointed out in *Modern Language Notes* (March, 1921), Dante uses this device among others to bind together passages carrying a common, or interrelated, idea.

<sup>83</sup> *Par.* xxvii, 64-66.

<sup>84</sup> Hence the symbol of the upright ladder in the heaven of Saturn. Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxxii, 2; clxxx, vi.

Virtues, of whom Charity is the leader, turned his absorbed gaze from Beatrice to the left, exclaiming "*Tropppo fiso!*"<sup>85</sup> Attention to the "left" is to the duty of the active life, especially of provision for others.<sup>86</sup> So Beatrice herself had foretold that he must remain a while longer a "forester" in the forest of this world.<sup>87</sup> Had she herself not descended into hell for his sake? She was indeed immune from the evils of hell,<sup>88</sup> but then so Dante now was from the beasts, the vices, which infest this dark forest. To hunt them down "for the sake of the world that evil lives,"<sup>89</sup> he must abide in patient service—and even suffering. For, as he had been repeatedly warned in his upward journey, in spite of his redemption—or rather because of it—the forest of this life must become darker than ever for him. Only, it will no longer be the darkness of his own sinfulness, but the darkness of tribulation and sorrow, which shall overshadow him even as the

<sup>85</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 1-9.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, cii, 4, 6<sup>m</sup>: ". . . sapientia autem pertinet ad dextram, sicut et caetera spiritualia bona: temporale autem nutrimentum ad sinistram," etc.

<sup>87</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 100-102.

<sup>88</sup> *Inf.* ii, 87-93.

<sup>89</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 103.

apostle Paul. To this threat, as foretold by the old warrior, his ancestor Cacciaguida, Dante had opposed a front of moral stoicism, declaring himself

“Ben tetragono ai colpi di ventura,—” <sup>90</sup>

a four-square tower whose walls are the cardinal virtues.<sup>91</sup> But although stoic virtue may offer a brave front to persecution, none the less it feels the bitterness thereof.<sup>92</sup> Beatrice offers, on the other hand, the true consolation of Christian love and trust in God, of charity.<sup>93</sup> And her loving voice, and the love in her eyes, release Dante from every care, from every desire—

“Fin che il piacere eterno, che diretto  
Raggiava in Beatrice, dal bel viso  
Mi contentava col secondo aspetto.” <sup>94</sup>

“The eternal bliss” directly reflected upon her face is, as Dante has just said, love, and love

<sup>90</sup> *Par.* xvii, 24.

<sup>91</sup> Albertus Magnus describes the Virgin as a “tower,” having “quadraturam quatuor cardinalium.” *Op. cit.* XI, v, 2.

<sup>92</sup> *Par.* xviii, 1-3.

<sup>93</sup> *Ib.* 4-6.

<sup>94</sup> *Ib.* 16-18.



is in fact "the second aspect" of "eternal bliss," or beatitude:

"Si fonda

L'esser bēato nell' atto che vede,

Non in quel ch'ama, che poscia seconda."<sup>95</sup>

Finally, Dante's last thanksgiving and prayer to Beatrice sums the fourfold effect of her charity upon him and within him.<sup>96</sup>

(1) By her loving mercy reaching down to the hell of his perverse spirit, she has lifted him up to *hope*. (2) By her grace and goodness she has shown him what God, the Highest Good, is like, and so confirmed his *faith*. (3) By the heat of her charity, she has kindled in him *charity*, and charity maketh free.<sup>97</sup> (4) Let her "magnificence" so watch over and keep his healed soul that it may be released from the body "pleasing" to her who is perfect charity. She hears and fulfils his desire; for through her own "prayer and holy love,"<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> *Par.* xxviii, 109-111. *Il secondo aspetto* may also mean "the reflected aspect." Dante is given to packing two meanings, one more esoteric than the other, into a word or phrase.

<sup>96</sup> *Par.* xxxi, 79-90.

<sup>97</sup> "Charitas, quae in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum diffunditur, facit nos liberos." St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlv, 1, 2<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> *Par.* xxxi, 96.

transmitted by Bernard, the Virgin, dispenser of beatitude, grants Dante the vision of God, by which his "desire and will" are, like Beatrice's own, altogether moved by perfect charity.<sup>99</sup> In other words, by direct revelation of God he is assured of being in a state of grace,<sup>100</sup> and therefore pleasing to

<sup>99</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 143-145. Dante's last prayer to Beatrice may be compared with St. Bonaventure's psalm to the Virgin:

"Domina, in coelo misericordia tua: et gratia tua diffusa est super terram.

Potentia et virtus in brachio tuo: robur et fortitudo in dextera tua.

Benedictum sit imperium tuum super coelos: benedicta sit magnificentia tua super terram." (*Psalt. majus b. Mar. Virg.* 35.)

In view of the symbolic—and real—relationship between Beatrice and the Virgin, presently to be discussed, this similarity is not likely to be mere coincidence.

<sup>100</sup> ". . . tripliciter aliquid cognosci potest. *Uno modo* per revelationem: et hoc modo potest aliquis scire se habere gratiam: revelat enim Deus hoc aliquando aliquibus ex speciali privilegio, ut securitatis gaudium etiam in hac vita in eis incipiat, et confidentius, et fortius magnifica opera prosequantur, et mala praesentia vitae sustineant, sicut Paulo dictum est 2. ad Cor. 12: *Sufficit tibi ratio mea.*" St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, cxii, 5, c. This text is noteworthy in connection with Dante's confidence in his "magnificum opus," the *Divine Comedy*, with his noble endurance of exile and persecution, and with his haunting consciousness of manifold likeness to St. Paul. Cf. for his assurance of grace, *Par.* xxv, 52-57.

Beatrice. It may be repeated, by the way, that although this final and supreme revelation is obtained for Dante by Beatrice, she for that very reason must symbolize not it, but the means to it; and again the means to the revelation of God, which is beatitude, is charity. That beatific revelation is vouchsafed to living man only "by special privilege" in the strongest sense of the term. The "Dante" of the *Comedy*, accordingly, by no means represents typical Man.<sup>101</sup> On the contrary, thanks to the "miracle" Beatrice, his grace is miraculous. The spirits he meets marvel at it, and felicitate him on it.<sup>102</sup> In view of the magnitude of her benefaction, therefore, Beatrice is fitly called magnificent.<sup>103</sup>

It must be apparent, I think, from these illustrations viewed in light of the theological argument that one aspect at least of the symbolic Beatrice is Charity. Further illustrations could easily be given, but my pur-

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Paget Toynbee, *Concise Dante Dictionary*, s. n. *Dante*.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. e. g., *Purg.* xiii, 145-146; xiv, 1-15; xx, 41-42; *Par.* xxiv, 1-2; et al.

<sup>103</sup> "Magnificencia est in maximis donis et sumptibus, sed liberalitas in mediocribus." St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, lx, 5, c.

pose is to establish a case, not to write a commentary. But Beatrice represents Charity in only one aspect of her symbolic function. Thus, having charity, she possesses also the gifts of the Holy Spirit,<sup>104</sup> and accordingly her influence illumines the mind as well as kindles the will. In a secondary aspect, therefore, she represents "intellectual light" (*lumen intellectuale*), and is frequently hailed as such. So, for instance, Virgil to Dante:

"Veramente a così alto sospetto  
Non ti ferma, se quella nol ti dice,  
Che lume fia tra il vero e l'intelletto." <sup>105</sup>

This passage has been cited as confirmation of Beatrice as Revelation.<sup>106</sup> But, as has been shown, there is no revelation, in the right sense of the term, unless the recipient is capable of understanding it. At the time when Virgil speaks, Dante's mind is not "lighted," but "smokes."<sup>107</sup> What Beatrice does is to infuse, through charity, the "intel-

<sup>104</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxviii, 5.

<sup>105</sup> *Purg.* vi, 43-45.

<sup>106</sup> E.g., by Professor Grandgent: "A question involving the doctrine of grace transcends the power of reason, and is not to be 'settled' without revelation." Ed. *Divina Commedia*, note ad loc.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. *Par.* xxi, 110.

lectual light" which she herself, possessing, represents.<sup>108</sup> In one more aspect, Dante becomes connatural with her.

Among other passages in which Beatrice figures specifically as the light-giver,<sup>109</sup> there is one of capital importance, namely, that in which, after his immersion in Lethe, Dante is vouchsafed Beatrice's direct glance and her smile.<sup>110</sup> The four cardinal, or moral, Virtues declare themselves:

"Noi sem qui ninfe, e nel ciel semo stelle.

Pria che Beatrice discendesse al mondo,  
Fummo ordinate a lei per sue ancelle."

"By charity the acts of all the other virtues are ordered to the final end," beatitude.<sup>111</sup> Figuratively, therefore, the other virtues may be regarded as "handmaids" of Charity. They are then handmaids of Beatrice as Charity in two senses, according as we take the phrase "*discendesse al mondo*" to mean her mortal birth, or her descent from heaven to Dante in the earthly paradise. In the first

<sup>108</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlix, 2, 2<sup>m</sup>: ". . . intellectus, qui ponitur Spiritus Sancti, est quaedam acuta perspectio divinorum."

<sup>109</sup> E. g., *Purg.* viii, 112-114; xxxiii, 115.

<sup>110</sup> *Purg.* xxxi, 103-105.

<sup>111</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xxiii, 8, c.

case, since her dominant trait was predestined to be charity, her other virtues are ancillary to that. In the second case, in her, as a glorified spirit, while charity is only intensified,<sup>112</sup> the moral virtues persist merely formally, or in principle. For *prudence* in heaven is without danger of error, *fortitude* is without evil to be endured, *temperance* without incitement of lust; and the one act of *justice* is submission to God.<sup>113</sup> And how this just submission is made joyous by love is made clear to Dante by Piccarda<sup>114</sup> and Justinian.<sup>115</sup> But while the moral virtues so have no material function for the glorified Beatrice, their formal perfection affects Dante as model and inspiration. And thus they are handmaids of her charity towards him, leading him to her eyes, through which her charity radiates, kindling and illumining his soul. In other words, upon the charity so infused into him follow the gifts of intelligence (*intellectus*) and wisdom (*sapientia*), giving him an insight above reason into the mystery of the Incarnation, the principle of

<sup>112</sup> Ib. I-II, lxvii, 6, c.

<sup>113</sup> Ib. I, c.

<sup>114</sup> *Par.* iii, 70-87.

<sup>115</sup> Ib. vi, 118-126.

salvation. So charity deepened, faith fortified, and hope renewed,<sup>116</sup> he is led by these three holy Virtues to realize Beatrice's "second beauty," her smile,—or beatitude reflected in her. For that end to which the three holy virtues lead is beatitude. Or, to put the case more fully, her smile signifies that Dante's soul is now pleasing to her, as later he prays it may also be when released from the body.<sup>117</sup> And to her as a glorified spirit nothing can be pleasing which is not also pleasing and acceptable to God. Therefore, Dante is assured of God's favor, or beatitude. Or, once more, to resume the whole argument in technical terms, "by grace freely given" (*gratia gratis data*) Beatrice coöperates with Dante to bring him to God. Thanks to her efficacious aid, he receives the "grace which makes acceptable" (*gratia gratum faciens*), "by which man is united to God."<sup>118</sup> Since, according to the physiological-psy-

<sup>116</sup> Cf. the in principle identical statement in *Conv.* III, xiv, 113-141.

<sup>117</sup> *Par.* xxxi, 88-90.

<sup>118</sup> "Duplex est gratia. Una quidem, per quam ipse homo Deo conjungitur, quae vocatur *gratia gratum faciens*: alia vero, per quam unus homo cooperatur alteri ad hoc, quod ad Deum reducatur: hujusmodi autem donum vocatur *gratia gratis data*." St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, cxi, 1, c.

chology of love,<sup>119</sup> her love—which is charity—proceeds on the ray from her eyes through his into his heart, there kindling charity, so her eyes may poetically be regarded as the efficient cause of the effect of charity in him, or gift of wisdom, by which he more intimately knows God. Or, by ellipsis, he may fitly call her eyes “*principio di Amore*,”<sup>120</sup> and, in reference to her having the gift of wisdom, “demonstrations of wisdom, by which truth is seen with certainty.”<sup>121</sup> For such is the power of the “divine instinct” infused by the “gift of wisdom.” Again, the end or final cause, of his infused grace of charity is union with God, or beatitude. That supremely desirable consummation is what draws, or persuades, his will, as the splendor of a light draws the moth. So, since again according to love-psychology, the beloved’s smile signifies the “end of love,” or reward of her favor,<sup>122</sup> by which the lover is persuaded to service, so, once more by elliptical statement, Beatrice’s smile is called the “persuasions of Wisdom, by which is demon-

<sup>119</sup> Cf. *Conv.* II, xi, 32-48.

<sup>120</sup> *V. N.* xix, 133.

<sup>121</sup> *Conv.* III, xv, 12-15. Cf. *Inf.* x, 130-132: her eyes “see all.”

<sup>122</sup> *V. N.* xix, 133-134.



strated the interior light of Wisdom under a certain veil." <sup>123</sup> To Dante, now in full conduct of the three holy virtues, however, Beatrice accords the grace of removing this veil.<sup>124</sup> His intuitive power is proportioned to his increased charity, and his eyes are of one "whose wit is in the flame of love adult."<sup>125</sup> Therefore they are able to look upon Wisdom's end, Truth, directly, as the "splendor of the living light eternal," and no longer merely upon its "pallid" reflection in the "Parnassus well" of human reasoning.<sup>126</sup> So the "new intelligence which Love has given,"<sup>127</sup> wisdom as a divine gift and effect of charity, transcends his old wisdom, that was but an "intellectual virtue." Reciprocally, the new-seen splendor of Truth strengthens his love of it anew, and that new-strengthened love will induce new and deeper insight, and this cumulative process is renewed until, God's infinity directly seen and loved, there is no farther to go:

"Di là dal qual non è a che si aspiri." <sup>128</sup>

<sup>123</sup> *Conv.* III, xv, 16-18.

<sup>124</sup> *Purg.* xxxi, 136-138.

<sup>125</sup> *Par.* vii, 59-60.

<sup>126</sup> *Purg.* xxxi, 139-141.

<sup>127</sup> *V. N.* xlii, 49-50.

<sup>128</sup> *Purg.* xxxi, 24.

So that final consummation, or beatitude, is the end of a causal series, alternately efficient and proximately final, of which the factors are Beatrice's eyes and smile; and hence Dante could say in the *Convivio* that "*in queste due si sente quel piacere altissimo di beatitudine, il qual è massimo bene in Paradiso.*"<sup>129</sup> In other words, the visible Beatrice was for Dante the live symbol, or "shadowy preface," of Beatitude, final cause of his redemption, as well as the live symbol of Charity, efficient cause thereof. Or rather, she symbolizes the former also, precisely because she symbolizes the latter. For the whole causal sequence is reducible to this: charity generates vision, vision charity.<sup>130</sup> So is justified the implication of "beatitude" which Dante found in the name of Beatrice.<sup>131</sup>

I have dwelt upon this episode at perhaps disproportionate length. Some justification

<sup>129</sup> III, xv, 18-20.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, II *Sent.* i, 1: "Causa finalis et causa efficiens coincidunt." Also, *Contra Gent.* III, xvii: "Finis ultimus cujuslibet facientis, in quantum est faciens, est ipsemet."

<sup>131</sup> V. N. ii, 6-8,—in the light of Cino's interpretation in his canzone responsive to the third canzone of the *New Life*:

"Già te n'ei'n ciel gita,  
Beata gioia, com'chiamava il nome!"

(*Avegna ch'io-non-aggio*, ll. 7-8.)

may lie, however, in that it condenses in a brief action the symbolic procedure of the *Comedy* and—to some extent—of the *New Life* and *Banquet* as well. And incidentally, it illustrates how without confusion or inconsistency a live symbol like Beatrice can—or rather must—signify, or “stand for,” more than one thing, though in due proportion.

On the other hand, it offers a difficulty. There is presented on the allegorical stage a personification of Charity, one of the Virtues, the seven handmaids of Beatrice. If Beatrice symbolizes Charity, how can she have a “handmaid” also personifying Charity?

I answer, as I think the scholastic Dante himself would, by saying,—*Distinguo*. The charity which Beatrice symbolizes is divine charity, or *charitas in patria*; the charity which the handmaid personifies is human charity, or *charitas in via*. There is a real distinction between the two, since, although they have a common object in God, their powers of apprehending God differ. Charity of heaven knows its object by immediate intuition; charity of earth by faith. The latter therefore cannot reach to the perfection of the former.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxvii, 6, 2<sup>m</sup>.-3<sup>m</sup>.

This distinction between herself and her handmaid is, I think, borne out, and specifically applied, by Beatrice herself: After the mime of sensual love and brutal jealousy has been enacted by the harlot of the Church and the giant of the Empire,<sup>133</sup> the seven Virtues chant a psalm of desolation at the defilement of the Church.<sup>134</sup> What this defilement is, Dante does not leave to guesswork. In the mimic scene it is indeed lust, with which holy love could not consort. But the literal indictment of sensual passion has a broader intention; and for the detailed counts Dante gives a characteristic reference. Beatrice, "colorata come foco,"<sup>135</sup> comforts her weeping handmaids. Later, likewise discolored from white to red, St. Peter details the abuses of his successors.<sup>136</sup> Both he and Beatrice prophesy vengeance to come, and reform. Both call upon Dante to denounce the evil, and to announce the reformer. The passages are parallel, only whereas in the first Dante is shown a scene of lust, in the second he is told plainly of a broader group of vices. St.

<sup>133</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 136-160.

<sup>134</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii, 1-3.

<sup>135</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii, 9.

<sup>136</sup> *Par.* xxvii, 10-66.

Peter arraigns the Church for money-greed, offensive partisanship and incitement of war on Christians, of simony, rapacity, hypocrisy, and usury. Immediately after St. Peter's invective, Beatrice again shows Dante the earth,

"L'aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci."<sup>137</sup>

She contrasts with the Empyrean girt in with "light and love," its dim wretchedness, and exclaims:

"O cupidigia, che i mortali affonde  
Sì sotto te, che nessuno ha potere  
Di trarre gli occhi fuor delle tue onde!"<sup>138</sup>

"Cupidity," which turns the eyes of desire from eternal to temporal things, is the root, not only of the special vices denounced by St. Peter, but also of all evils and all sins.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>137</sup> *Par.* xxii, 151. Cf. *Par.* xxvii, 85-86.

<sup>138</sup> *Par.* xxvii, 121-123.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxxxiv, 1, c: ". . . secundum quosdam cupiditas tripliciter dicitur. Uno modo, prout est appetitus inordinatus divitiarum, et sic est speciale peccatum. Alio modo, secundum quod significat inordinatum appetitum cuiuscumque boni temporalis, et sic est genus omnis peccati; nam in omni peccato est inordinata conversio ad commutabile bonum, ut, dictum est. Tertio modo sumitur, prout significat quamdam inclinationem naturae corruptae ad bona corruptibilia

The original charge, symbolically brought against the Church, of carnal lust, is thus broadened to cupidity, a term the intention of which ranges from avarice in particular to concupiscence in general. Now Virgil established for Dante the conclusion:

"Quinci comprender puoi ch'esser conviene  
Amor sementa in voi d'ogni virtute  
E d'ogni operazion che merta pene." <sup>140</sup>

And all love is divided into "love of friendship" and "love of concupiscence." <sup>141</sup> Love of friendship wills the good of the beloved; love of concupiscence wills one's own good.<sup>142</sup> Charity is the "love of friendship" directed to God.<sup>143</sup> And since the two kinds of love are mutually exclusive, where the love of concupiscence is, charity cannot be. Hence the

inordinate appetenda, et sic dicunt cupiditatem esse radicem omnium peccatorum ad similitudinem radicis arboris, quae ex terra trahit alimentum; sic enim ex amore rerum temporalium omne peccatum procedit."

<sup>140</sup> *Purg.* xvii, 103-105.

<sup>141</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, xxvi, 4.

<sup>142</sup> ". . . ille proprie dicitur amicus, cui aliquod bonum volumus: illud autem dicitur concupiscere, quod volumus nobis." *Ib.*

<sup>143</sup> So Francesca implies that God is not her *friend* (amico). *Inf.* v, 91.

pertinence of Beatrice's words to her grieving handmaids:

*"Modicum, et non videbitis me,  
Et iterum, sorelle mie dilette,  
Modicum, et vos videbitis me!"*<sup>144</sup>

The Church, and because of its bad example, the world, is full of the love of concupiscence. Therefore, there is no place in it for her, who is altogether the "love of friendship," charity. When the predestined *Veltro* shall have driven out that "ancient she-wolf of cupidity," she will return.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, the Scriptural context from which Beatrice quotes, makes the same point. Christ has declared love to be the one commandment he lays

<sup>144</sup> *Purg.* xxxiii, 10-12.

<sup>145</sup> It seems supererogatory to dispute the significance of the she-wolf of the dark forest when Dante himself identifies it for us with *Cupidigia*. (Cf. *Purg.* xx, 10-12.) I concur in the objection to *Avarice* as the interpretation, since Dante certainly nowhere hints at any personal proneness to that mean vice. But *cupidity*, in scholastic usage, connotes not only avarice, but also the most basic of all vices, that self-interest in the goods of this world which is the opposite and enemy of the charity which leads to the true Good, God. It is the error of Dante which lost Dante the salutation of Beatrice, since his love of her was not like noble love,—the love, that is, which is of friendship, or charity. (*V. N.* xii, xviii.)

upon his disciples.<sup>146</sup> It is the "love of friendship," charity, which gives, not asks.<sup>147</sup> The world, on the other hand, is full of the "love of concupiscence." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."<sup>148</sup> Therefore, he will leave them for a little, but only for a little. And he promises to send the Comforter, the "spirit of truth," whose name is Love.<sup>149</sup>

Manifestly, Dante is drawing analogy between Christ with his grieving disciples and Beatrice with her grieving handmaids. The analogy is complicated and perhaps imperfect, but it may account, I think, for the duplicated rôle of Charity in Beatrice and the personified virtue. Christ, whose spirit and commandment are altogether of true love, departs from the world of base love, yet will leave behind *in the chosen few* the spirit of true love, the Comforter.<sup>150</sup> Beatrice, as true love, is driven

<sup>146</sup> *John* xv, 12.

<sup>147</sup> *Ib.* 13.

<sup>148</sup> *Ib.* 18-19.

<sup>149</sup> *Ib.* 26. Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T. I*, xxxvii, 1.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. *I Cor.* xiii, 13.



out of the basely loving Church and world, yet leaves behind in the hearts of the chosen few—and especially in Dante's heart—the spirit of true love. For the seven virtues are all implicit in their "form," or determining principle, charity. In other words, Beatrice is Charity as it is in heaven, in the heart of Mary; the personified Virtue, her coexistent but not coequal handmaid, is charity as it exists on earth, in the hearts of Mary's servants,—in Dante's, for instance. As this human spirit of charity is a diminished replica of the divine spirit of charity, there is perfect allegorical propriety in calling the former a little "sister" of the latter, and no allegorical impropriety in bringing the two face to face.

Dante, and Christian theologians generally, built up an elaborate system of symbolic imagery from the obvious analogy between beneficent God and the Sun which radiates light and heat, the two prime vitalizing forces. Not only is God therefore called the Sun,<sup>151</sup> but also by extension any active agency transmitting the divine influence may be so-called and be accredited with powers figuratively paralleling those of the physical Sun. Thus Beatrice, infusing into Dante the light

<sup>151</sup> Cf. e. g., *Par.* x, 53.

of wisdom and the ardor of love, is acclaimed as *his* Sun:

“Quel sol, che pria d’amor mi scaldò il petto,  
Di bella verità m’avea scoperto,” etc.<sup>152</sup>

In truth, that two-powered ray emanating from her really has its ultimate source in the divine Sun, God.<sup>153</sup> The divine ray shines also upon him, but hitherto has found his mind opaque to its glory.<sup>154</sup> To be illumined, he needed the reënforcement of her nearer light.

Not only was the Sun accepted as symbol of the one God, but the active process of the Sun was conceived to represent the actual procession of the triune God. The Father is the Sun itself; the Son, its ray or splendor of light; the Holy Spirit, the heat emanating from both the Sun itself and its ray.<sup>155</sup> Also,

<sup>152</sup> *Par.* iii, 1-2.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. *Par.* v, 1-6.

<sup>154</sup> *Ib.* 6-12.

<sup>155</sup> “Per solem saepius interpretatur Pater, per radium vel splendorem solis Filius qui est splendor gloriae et figura Patris (*Ad Hebr.* i, 3), per calorem Spiritus sanctus, de quo dicitur: *Nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.* (*Psal.* xviii, 7.) Spiritus enim sanctus est amor Patris et Filii. Sicut autem radius vel splendor solis, ex quo sol fuit, processit a sole et procedit semperque procedet: sic Filius aeternaliter procedit a Patre. Et sicut calor aeternaliter procedit tam a sole quam a radio: sic Spiritus

"in the Sun which circles the machine of the world, is signified the *power* of the Father; in the splendor which illumines all, the *wisdom* of the Son; in the fervor which warms all, the *benevolence* of the Holy Spirit."<sup>156</sup> So the Empyrean, which exists only in the divine mind,<sup>157</sup> and typifies that mind, is said to be "pure light,"—

"Luce intellettüal piena d'amore,  
Amor di vero ben pien di letizia."<sup>158</sup>

This triplicity of generating-power, light, and heat of the Trinity as the divine Sun is transferred by analogy to lesser illuminating agencies as Suns. Thus immediately under the Trinity, but above the three hierarchies of the angels, the Virgin is posited as constituting a hierarchy by herself, and as a Sun from which proceeds light and heat in the same fashion as from the Trinity.<sup>159</sup> The

sanctus ab utroque, id est, Filio et Patre." Albert. Mag., *De laud. b. Mar. Virg.* XII, v, 1, 2.

<sup>156</sup> Ib.

<sup>157</sup> *Par.* xxvii, 109-110.

<sup>158</sup> *Par.* xxx, 40-41.

<sup>159</sup> E. g. (Maria) "ideo etiam dicitur *electa ut sol* (Cantic. vi, 9) . . . ad illuminandum, scilicet intellectum per veram cognitionem, et inflammandum affectum per veram dilectionem." Albert. Mag. op. cit. VII, iii, 1.

church writers ring all possible changes on the symbol itself, and on its derivatives. As Albert says, "Mary is compared to light with manifold propriety. . . . For she is the light which after the Son illumines every light."<sup>160</sup> So from her is the light which comes to Dante in the dark wood.<sup>161</sup> For he has constantly invoked her name.<sup>162</sup> And the light of the Sun of Mary has so healed and purified his eyes, half-blinded with sin, that at last they are able to endure the direct ray of the "Sun of the angels," God.<sup>163</sup> For it is only "sick eyes" that are dazzled by the sun; to them, become sound, the Sun's glory is as grateful as to the eyes of an eagle.<sup>164</sup> Dante dramat-

<sup>160</sup> Ib. VII, x, 1.

<sup>161</sup> "Ideo etiam illuminatrix: quia cunctis se implorantibus humiliter et devote impetrat *lucem verae cognitionis*. . . . Unde quotiens sentimus nos esse in tenebris, debemus nos ei nomen suum commemorare orantes ut illud interpretatur in nobis, ne falso ei impositum videatur." Ib. I, i, 2, ff.

<sup>162</sup> *Par.* xxiii, 88-89.

<sup>163</sup> Maria lux "quia oculos illuminat, id est, intellectum et affectum, qui sunt oculi animae. Intellectum cognitione sui et Dei, affectum dilectione Dei et proximi." Op. cit. VII, x, 1. Cf. *Par.* xxxiii, 25-27; *Purg.* xxvi, 58-60; *Professione di Fede*, 232-240.

<sup>164</sup> "Sol aegris oculis nocivus non ex vitio suo, sed ex vitio oculorum. . . . Unde, Eccle. xi, 7: *Dulce lumen et delectabile est oculis videre solem*. Et hoc est quod dicit

ically insists upon the gradual strengthening and purifying of his physical vision as he ascends nearer and nearer to the divine Sun. He starts "blind" with sin—

"Quinci vo su per non esser più cieco."<sup>165</sup>

After the murk of hell, the mild light of the dawning sun comforts his eyes on the shore of the mount of purgatory.<sup>166</sup> It is the first positive application, symbolically speaking, of the cleansing medicament of light which is to fulfil Cato's requirement that

" . . . non si converria l'occhio sorpreso  
D'alcuna nebbia andar dinanzi al primo  
Ministro, ch'è di quei di Paradiso."<sup>167</sup>

Light is the necessary and immediate medium of vision,<sup>168</sup> but given in excess it blinds. It must be accommodated, therefore, to the

Gregorius de Domino: "Ipse incommutabilis in se permanens, aliter atque aliter sentitur in cogitatione hominum pro qualitate vitiorum, sicut lux aegris oculis odiosa, sanis autem gratiosa, eorum videlicet mutatione, non suo." *Ib.* XII, v, i, 5.

<sup>165</sup> *Purg.* xxvi, 58.

<sup>166</sup> *Purg.* i, 16-18.

<sup>167</sup> *Purg.* i, 97-99.

<sup>168</sup> "Lumen est medium in omni sensu. Sed in visu immediate, in aliis autem sensibus, mediantibus aliis qualitatibus." St. Thomas, II *Sent.* xiii, 3, c. fi.

visual power of the recipient. And figuratively, light signifies truth.<sup>169</sup> In one aspect, therefore, the whole process of Dante's spiritual ascent consists in the accommodation of his eyes, physical and spiritual, to brighter and brighter light.

As said, the ultimate source—so far as purblind humanity is concerned—of this healing and guiding light is the Sun of Mary.<sup>170</sup> If now the Virgin is in herself thus conceived as a self-active light-giving and heat-giving Sun, she may also be conceived as embodying in herself the three aspects of the Trinity. By analogy, also, these three aspects may, as in the Trinity, be hypostatized as Persons. Naturally, in a so resulting secondary Trinity, the one real divine Person is Mary herself. She, the divine Mother, assumes the rôle of the divine Father, and

<sup>169</sup> "(Nomen lucis) primo quidem est institutum ad significandum id, quod facit manifestationem in sensu visus, postmodum autem extensum est ad significandum omne illud, quod facit manifestationem secundum quamcumque cognitionem." St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, lxvii, 1, c.

<sup>170</sup> Cf., e. g., Albert. Mag., *op. cit.* VII, iii, 9: "Qui in solem defigit oculos, a posteriori ponit umbram suam. Similiter qui cordis oculos, intellectum videlicet et affectum constanter defigeret in hunc solem, Mariae recolens paupertatem, umbram rerum labentium facillime addorsaret. Sed . . . pauci sunt tales."

represents in the solar symbolism the Sun itself, or generating-power of Light. As such, she sends forth a light-ray; and from the light-ray and the Sun both there is emitted heat. As we have seen, in the actual Trinity the Son is conceived as the light-ray, the Holy Spirit as the emitted heat. Dante's invention was to fill out the 'Marian' Trinity with the two functionally apposite persons St. Lucia and Beatrice. Such is the symbolic bond of unity between the "three blessed ladies." Recognizing it, we must modify in so far forth the symbolic value of Beatrice as already defined. Fundamentally, Beatrice symbolizes Charity, but not charity in the abstract, nor yet *merely* the inherent and dominant virtue of Bice Portinari, but the charity of the Virgin-mother herself.<sup>171</sup> Be it said emphatically, however, that the rôle in no wise discredits or diminishes the actuality of Beatrice herself as for Dante a beneficent ally in heaven. By loving-service of the Virgin she has become in her degree "connatural" with the Virgin. Dante's fiction is simply to extend a discipular likeness to its

<sup>171</sup> Hence the maternal attitude assumed by Beatrice in paradise, and accepted by Dante, even though, humanly speaking, she was younger than he.

ideal limit of spiritual coalescence. And indeed, so far as he personally was concerned, Beatrice did in a sense fill the rôle. What Mary's love effects for all the world (including him), Beatrice effected for him alone.

For the lover of Beatrice to identify her, symbolically, with the all-merciful love of Mary was natural enough. The choice of St. Lucia to represent the second Person of this secondary Trinity is, on the other hand, rather characteristic of Dante's scholastically subtle ingenuity than, I think, of any deep personal loyalty. Her name signifies "light;" she was specially accredited with the power of healing weak eyes; St. Bonaventure names her as among the special votaries of Mary;<sup>172</sup> in the *Golden Legend* her life is assimilated to Mary's—she is resolutely virginal; she calls herself "*ancilla Dei*;" her nurse tells her, Lucia's, rejected lover that Lucia is "*sponsa Dei*." For this presumed close likeness to the Virgin she would reflect her light most intensely:

"Chè l'ardor santo ch'ogni cosa raggia,  
Nella più simigliante è più vivace."<sup>173</sup>

<sup>172</sup> "Honorificate eam (Mariam) in voce labiorum vestrorum: per hoc ejus gratiam Agatha, Lucia, Margarita, et Cecilia susceperunt." *Psalt. maj. b. Mar. Virg.* xiv, 4.

<sup>173</sup> *Par.* vii, 74-75.



Dante, who actually suffered from weak eyes,<sup>174</sup> may have really become her votary (*fede*le), as Mary calls him, for the sake of Lucia's supposed healing power. Whether he was or not, however, is of no great importance. For in the *Comedy*, the eyes of his that are really healed are the "eyes of the soul," intellect and will, and by the light of wisdom and the heat of charity.

Considered in and by herself therefore, Lucia in the poem is the symbol—or perhaps more accurately, the hypostasis—of the light which emanates from Mary.<sup>175</sup> Beatrice is the symbol—or hypostasis—of the heat which emanates from Mary and Lucia. The distinction, therefore, between Lucia and Beatrice is not absolute, but analogous to that between the Son and the Holy Spirit. The procession of the Son, or the Word, is by the mode of the intellect, which is Wisdom; that of the Holy Spirit by the mode of the Will, which is Love.<sup>176</sup> Extending the analogy into

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *Conv.* III, ix, 147–157.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. St. Bonaventure's prayer of Mary, beginning: "Emitte lucem tuam." *Psalt. maj. b. Mar. Virg.*, Ps. 142, fi.

<sup>176</sup> ". . . in divinis . . . duae processiones, una per modum intellectus, quae est processio Verbi, alia per modum voluntatis, quae est processio amoris," i. e. of the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas, *S. T.* xxxvii, 1.

a symbolic identity, we may say that Lucia is the Word of Mary, and Beatrice the Love of Mary, and that their respective functions in the salvation of Dante are developed from the dramatic application of this symbolic identity.

“Però se il caldo Amor la chiara Vista  
Della prima Virtù dispone e segna,  
Tutta la perfezione quivi s’acquista.” <sup>177</sup>

Dante is here speaking, no doubt, of the collaboration of the primal Trinity, but in respect to man’s redemption analogous collaboration holds of what I may call the secondary, or *Marian*, Trinity, as Dante symbolically conceives it.

In the dramatic action, by Lucia was the Word of Mary passed to Beatrice. And Beatrice, first through Virgil, and then directly, manifests the Word to Dante. So Beatrice may also be said to represent the Word. In Christian theology, Christ is properly speaking the Word of the Father, but in so far as the Holy Spirit manifests the Word, the Holy Spirit may figuratively speaking be called the Word.<sup>178</sup> So Beatrice,

<sup>177</sup> *Par.* xiii, 79–81.

<sup>178</sup> “Quod vero Basilius interpretatur verbum pro Spiritu Sancto, improprie, et figurate locutus est, prout

manifesting the Word of the Mother of Christ, may be figuratively identified with Christ; in which case the clue is offered to a mysterious compliment to her in the *Comedy*. She is about to expound the Incarnation and Passion of Christ in response to Dante's desire unspoken through timid reverence. So Dante declares:

"Ma quella riverenza che s'indonna  
Di tutto me, pur per BE e per ICE,  
Mi richinava come l'uom ch'assonna." <sup>179</sup>

This is commonly understood to mean that if he was reverent before the earthly Bice, how much more so before the heavenly Beatrice. The artifice is elaborate for so simple a point. Now it will be noted that when we say first *Be* and then *ICE* we sound three letters of the Italian alphabet,—*B*, *I*, and *C*. To any medieval Catholic, the letter *I* followed by the letter *C* would inevitably suggest *Iesus Christus*. Again, in all Latin religious writing *B.* before a proper name means *Beatus*; and the epithet belongs to Christ in both his

verbum alicujus dici potest omne illud, quod est manifestativum ejus, ut sic ea ratione dicatur Spiritus Sanctus verbum Filii, quia manifestat Filium." St. Thomas, *S. T. I.*, xxxiv, 2, 5<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>179</sup> *Par.* vii, 13-15.

humanity and his divinity.<sup>180</sup> The name Bice therefore subtly implies analogy between its owner and Christ. And as from *Bice* comes *Beatrice*, so from Christ comes beatitude, which Beatrice by name and act signifies.

Again, though properly speaking, the Word signifies the second Person of the Trinity, figuratively speaking it may signify the Word of Christ as recorded for mankind in Scripture. "Principal author" of Scripture, however, is the Holy Spirit, who, acting through the instrumental authors—and especially Mary, in it has manifested the deeper mysteries of God.<sup>181</sup> Beatrice, corresponding in function to the Holy Spirit as well as associated with Mary, manifests mysteries of

<sup>180</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *Cont. Gent.* I, c.: *Quod Deus est beatus.*

<sup>181</sup> ". . . auctor principalis sacrae Scripturae est Spiritus sanctus, qui in uno verbo sacrae Scripturae intellexit multo plura quam per expositores sacrae Scripturae exponantur, vel discernantur: nec est etiam inconueniens quod homo, qui fuit auctor instrumentalis sacrae Scripturae, in uno verbo plura intelligeret." St. Thomas, *Quodlibet* VII, xiv, 5<sup>m</sup>. This passage, by the way, may be cited as one of many justifying Dante in his habit of packing several meanings into a single word or phrase. Mary is said to have dictated a considerable portion of the Gospels to the evangelists. Cf. Albert. Mag., op. cit. IV, xxxi, 2.

the Scriptures to Dante. Also, through "grace freely given" by the Holy Spirit, chosen men receive the gift of prophecy, which includes the power to interpret Scripture;<sup>182</sup> so through Beatrice Dante ultimately receives the gift of prophecy, and expresses it in the *Divine Comedy* itself. And at the risk of repetition, which is wellnigh unavoidable in so complex a subject-matter, I may restate the bases of that prophesying.

The final end to which Beatrice as Charity would lead Dante is beatitude, or union with God.<sup>183</sup> "The essence of beatitude consists in the act of the intellect."<sup>184</sup> It is the "*ben dell'intelletto*."<sup>185</sup> Intellect, in this connection, is an intuitive faculty, in contradistinction to the discursive reason.<sup>186</sup> It is the "eye of the intellect" by which we see God face to face

<sup>182</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxi-clxxviii; also, my essay—*Ariadne's Crown*.

<sup>183</sup> "Charitas est amor Dei, non qualiscumque, sed quo diligitur Deus ut beatitudinis objectum, ad quod ordinamur per fidem, et spem." St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxxv, 5, 1<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>184</sup> *Ib.* iii, 4, c.

<sup>185</sup> *Inf.* iii, 18.

<sup>186</sup> ". . . intellectus et ratio differunt quantum ad modum cognoscendi: quia scilicet intellectus cognoscit simplici intuitu, ratio vero discurrendo de uno in aliud." St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, lix, 1, 1<sup>m</sup>.

(*quo Deus inspicitur*), as opposed to the "eye of reason," by which "created intelligible things" are seen.<sup>187</sup> For any eye to see, it must have light. And, in principle, the more light there is, the better the eye can see. For owlish eyes, which, inured to the dark, cannot stand the light of day, the remedy is light, and more light, gradually applied,—as the eagle is said to train the eyes of its young to gaze unflinchingly at the sun. Of course, for such a rigorously homoeopathic treatment to be successful, the patient must be an eaglet born; an owl, presumably, would be merely blinded altogether. Man is an eaglet born, and potentially capable of gazing at the sun. If he cannot, it is only because his eyes have become habituated to the shadow of two veils,—the veil of sin, and the veil of sense. Only when both are removed, can he regain his native eagle-like vision. Yet, on the other hand, he must pay the price of having played the owl so long: habituation to the light must be as gradual as habituation to the dark was complete and long.

It is the "three blessed ladies" who so restore to Dante his native eagle-sight by removing from his eyes the veiling double cataract of

<sup>187</sup> St. Thomas, *De veritate*, xix, ob. 6 and 6<sup>m</sup>

sin and sense,<sup>188</sup> and with loving care gradually exposing them to more and more light, until at last he, who had groped blindly in the dark forest, can endure the direct and undiminished effulgence of the divine Sun. Obvious also is the function of each of the three ladies, separately considered, as factors in the curative process. The medicament is light. Mary is the source of the healing light;<sup>189</sup> Lucia, the healing light itself; and Beatrice, dispenser of the healing light.

As said, light is given according to the capacity of the recipient. This capacity is measured by charity. Beatrice, having perfect charity of heaven, receives the light—or word—of Mary, transmitted by Lucia, in its fulness and directly. Her intellect is therefore altogether intuitive, or angelic.<sup>190</sup> But Virgil, to whom Beatrice in turn transmits the light she has received, lacks the "holy virtues," and so receives the light only

<sup>188</sup> Bernard beseeches the Virgin:

"Perchè tu ogni nube gli dislegghi  
Di sua mortalità coi preghi tuoi,  
Sì che il Sommo Piacer gli si dispieghi."

(*Par.* xxxiii, 31-33.)

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Albert. Mag., *op. cit.* VII, iii & x.

<sup>190</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, lviii, 3.

to the capacity of human reason.<sup>191</sup> So Virgil in his turn, transmitting the light to Dante, proceeds by discursive argument, or reasoning. So far as the light of reason goes, he is indeed wise and right:

“Maestro, i tuoi ragionamenti  
Mi son sì certi, e prendon sì mia fede,  
Che gli altri mi sarian carboni spenti.”<sup>192</sup>

But as reason is dependent upon the data of sense, it has no certain vision of things beyond sense. So Virgil himself admits:

“Quanto ragion qui vede  
Dirti poss'io; da indi in là t'aspetta  
Pure a Beatrice, ch'opera è di fede.”<sup>193</sup>

In other words, in Virgil the “divine light,” Lucia, is reduced to the “natural light of the intellect, which is a certain participation in that eternal light, yet from afar off, and in defective degree;” whereas the light of faith

<sup>191</sup> “Animae vero humanae, quae veritatis notitiam per quemdam discursum acquirunt, rationales vocantur. Quod quidem contingit ex debilitate intellectualis luminis in eis. Si enim haberent plenitudinem intellectualis luminis, sicut angeli, statim in primo aspectu principiorum total virtutem eorum comprehenderent, intuendo quidquid ex eis syllogizari posset.” Ib.

<sup>192</sup> *Inf.* xx, 100-102.

<sup>193</sup> *Purg.* xviii, 46-48. Cf. *Purg.* xv, 76-78.



is abundant, and almost as if the sun were present, and it extends beyond sense.<sup>194</sup> Relatively weak though it be, however, this natural light of the intellect, the discursive reason, is yet sufficient by habitual application to acquire the moral and intellectual virtues in such degree as to render man captain of his own soul, and to make him eligible to the company of those noble and wise pagans who inhabit the castle of light in Limbo.<sup>195</sup> Like them, Dante by reason has acquired control over the lower forces of his nature, but his reason cannot perfect itself. That perfection comes only through the Christian virtues.<sup>196</sup>

<sup>194</sup> "Lumen divinum dupliciter nobis in via communicatur: scilicet uno modo modice, et quasi sub parvo radio. Et hoc est lumen naturalis intellectus, quod est quaedam participatio illius lucis aeternae, multum tamen distans, et ab illo deficiens. Alio modo in abundantia quadam, et quasi in quadam solis praesentia, ubi acies mentis nostrae reverberatur, quia supra nos est, et supra sensum hominis, quod nobis ostensum est. Et hoc est lumen fidei, quae nullam patitur opinionem infra suos terminos." St. Thomas, *Opus*. lxxii, prin°.

<sup>195</sup> *Inf.* iv.

<sup>196</sup> ". . . ratio potest dupliciter considerari: uno modo secundum se; alio modo secundum quod regit vires inferiores. Inquantum igitur est inferiorum virium regitiva, perficitur per prudentiam: et inde est quod omnes aliae virtutes morales, quibus inferiores perficiuntur,

Yet evidently we have not gauged the whole truth of Virgil's power. If, as commonly assumed, Virgil represents merely the faculty of human reason without the greater light of faith, how could he rise above Limbo, not to say guide Dante up to and through the Christian purgatory? Hell indeed he knew, having traversed it before;<sup>197</sup> philosophic reasoning can probe the depths of sin; but whence does it get the essentially Christian knowledge which the pagan Virgil shows throughout the *Purgatory*? Moreover, Virgil is for Dante not even the supreme exemplar of the discursive human reason. Aristotle is

"Il maestro di color che sanno."<sup>198</sup>

Indeed, the very philosophy which Virgil expounds to his pupil is, as he himself

formantur per prudentiam sicut per proximam formam. Sed fides perficit rationem in se consideratam, prout est speculativa veri; unde ejus non est formare virtutem inferiorem, sed formari a caritate, quae alias format, etiam ipsam prudentiam, inquantum ipsa prudentia propter finem, qui est caritatis objectum, circa ea quae sunt ad finem, ratiocinatur." (St. Thomas, *De ver.* xiv, 5, 11<sup>m</sup>.) Seen from this angle, we might describe Virgil's function as that of Prudence; Lucia's as that of Faith; Beatrice's as that of Charity.

<sup>197</sup> *Inf.* ix, 22-27.

<sup>198</sup> *Inf.* iv, 131.

acknowledges,<sup>199</sup> Aristotelian. For the author of the *Divine Comedy* was a Thomist, a Christian-Aristotelian.<sup>200</sup> Admittedly, Virgil was his actual guide as an allegorical poet, but Dante, I think, would have held it disloyalty to his master in allegory to compliment him at the cost of allegorical consistency. The key to the dilemma lies, I believe, in the tribute which Statius pays to the poet of the Fourth Eclogue. Considered for itself, the rôle assigned to Statius is puzzling, not to say extraordinary. He alone of all the penitent spirits met by Dante triumphs in Dante's presence. Why should this conspicuous honor be paid to one who by his own confession was but a faint-hearted Christian?

“. . . per paura chiuso cristian fu'mi,  
Lungamente mostrando paganesmo;  
E questa tepidezza il quarto cerchio  
Cerchiar mi fe'più ch'al quarto centesimo.”<sup>201</sup>

<sup>199</sup> *Inf.* xi, 79-81, 97-105.

<sup>200</sup> Inasmuch as Virgil presents the Aristotelian point of view as leading straight up to Christian theology, and so within its limits justified by that, the whole rôle of Virgil in the *Comedy* is in effect a document of Thomistic apologetics. (Cf. *The "True Meaning" of Dante's Vita Nuova*, by the present writer,—*Romanic Rev.* XI (1920), pp. 133-136.)

<sup>201</sup> *Purg.* xxii, 90-93.

Above all vices, Dante detested "*tepidezza*," as his scorn of the neutrals shows.<sup>202</sup> When it is seen, however, that in attributing to Virgil a certain power above reason, Statius so defines Virgil's representative, or symbolic, power, the importance of his rôle becomes manifest. He declares to Virgil:

"Tu prima m'invïasti  
Verso Parnaso a ber nelle sue grotte,  
E poi, appresso Dio, m'alluminasti.  
Facesti come quei che va di notte,  
Che porta il lume retro, e sè non giova,  
Ma dopo sè fa le persone dotte,  
Quando dicesti: 'Secol si rinnova;  
Torna giustizia, e primo tempo umano,  
E progenie discende dal ciel nova.'  
Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano!"<sup>203</sup>

Now it may be noted, first of all, that the double obligation expressed in the first tercet and last line quoted, is exactly parallel to that, explicitly and implicitly, acknowledged to Virgil by Dante himself. He too gives thanks to Virgil as his master in poetry.<sup>204</sup> And to Virgil, after God, he attributes the light which guided his way from the dark

<sup>202</sup> *Inf.* 34-51.

<sup>203</sup> *Purg.* xxii, 64-73.

<sup>204</sup> *Inf.* i, 82-87.

forest up to the very presence of his redeemer Beatrice in the central chariot of the Church.<sup>205</sup> For Statius Virgil had done an analogous service of himself, and yet not of himself. He had prophesied the Christ to come, and yet was unable to comprehend and to profit by his own prophecy. But the prophecy itself, so momentous and—as Statius's example proves—so salutary for others, could be no mere accident or coincidence, but, to use Virgil's own words:

"Vuolsi così colà dove si puote  
Ciò che si vuole."<sup>206</sup>

The author of the Fourth Eclogue was for the time being God's mouthpiece. The light of the Holy Spirit illuminated him.<sup>207</sup> But the illumination spent itself, so to speak, in the expression of the prophecy; his own under-

<sup>205</sup> Beatrice is the "center" in virtue of being perfect love or charity. (Cf. *V. N.* xii, 31-33.) And so Mary for the same reason: "quia caeteris sanctis vicissim lumen suum praebentibus, haec (Maria) sine vicissitudine semper aequali radio, quantum in se est, cunctis viventibus claritatem effundit," etc. Albert. Mag., op. cit. I, iii, 3. Cf. *ib.* VIII, i, 7.

<sup>206</sup> *Inf.* iii, 94-95; v, 23-24.

<sup>207</sup> ". . . prophetia simpliciter dicta non potest esse a natura, sed solum ex revelatione divina." St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, clxxii, I, c.

standing was left dark. It is a well recognized type of prophecy.<sup>208</sup> Caiaphas prophesying the immensely salutary effect of Christ's death offers another instance.<sup>209</sup> In other words, the gift of prophecy is from the Holy Spirit by "grace freely given;" but "grace freely given" (*gratia gratis data*) does not at all necessarily carry with it the "grace making acceptable" (*gratia gratum faciens*) which is essential to salvation, by charity uniting man's soul to God.<sup>210</sup>

If this reasoning be sound, the rôle of Statius takes on a real significance. He is symbolically Dante's *alter ego*. In each, Virgil's "grace freely given," sterile for Virgil himself, is transformed into fructifying "grace making acceptable." In each, the redeeming

<sup>208</sup> ". . . donum prophetiae aliquando datur homini et propter utilitatem aliorum, et propter mentis illustrationem: et hi sunt, in quorum animas sapientia divina per gratiam facientem se transferens, amicos Dei, et Prophetas eos constituit: quidam vero consequuntur donum prophetiae solum ad utilitatem aliorum, qui sunt quasi instrumenta divinae operationis." Ib. 4, 1<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>209</sup> ". . . quandoque autem ille, cujus mens movetur ad aliqua verba exprimenda, non intelligit quid Spiritus Sanctus per haec verba intendat: sicut patet de Caiapha, Joan, xi." Ib. 4, c.

<sup>210</sup> ". . . gratia autem gratum faciens ad hoc principaliter datur, ut anima hominis Deo per charitatem conjungatur." Ib.

transformation is due, in the first place, to the "grace of discourse" vouchsafed to Virgil in order that the divine message might move as well as inform.<sup>211</sup> So not only do Statius and Dante, in like fashion, testify to the inspiring eloquence of Virgil, but also Beatrice herself, as she tells him, put her trust in

"tuo parlare onesto  
Che onora te e quei che udito l'hanno." <sup>212</sup>

Confirmation of prophecy is usually, but not always, by miracle.<sup>213</sup> Statius found Virgil's prophecy confirmed by a world already pregnant with the true faith sown by apostles of the Word, who also in their "upright conduct" revealed the virtue which the Word generates.<sup>214</sup> This conversion of the world to Christianity by humble and persecuted folk is, as Dante will answer St. Peter,<sup>215</sup> precisely because it was done without the adventitious aid of miracles, the supreme miracle. So Dante in the *Comedy* will find Virgil's teaching confirmed by Beatrice, perfect in charity, who

<sup>211</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* clxxvii, 1, c.

<sup>212</sup> *Inf.* ii, 113-114.

<sup>213</sup> St. Thomas, *ib.* clxxviii.

<sup>214</sup> *Purg.* xxii, 76-78.

<sup>215</sup> *Par.* xxiv, 106-108.

even in her mortal life had "without miracle" performed the supreme miracle of converting the loveless into the loving heart.<sup>216</sup>

This parallelism between Statius and Dante extends even farther into their spiritual experience. As Statius was punished for his timid hiding of his worship of the true God under the "screen" of Pagan idolatry,<sup>217</sup> so Dante was punished for timidly hiding his real worship of Beatrice under the "screen" of the "ladies of defence," the "*simulacra*."<sup>218</sup> Statius's punishment was "more than four hundred years" of deferred union with God in the circle of sloth, and "more than five hundred" more in the circle of (for him) prodigality.<sup>219</sup> Dante's punishment was his ten years of unappeased thirst for Beatrice.<sup>220</sup> Incidentally, the two terms of punishment have a proportional relationship. "More than four hundred" plus "more than five hundred" make approximately ten hundred, or one hundred times Dante's penalty. Moreover,

<sup>216</sup> V. N. xxi.

<sup>217</sup> *Purg.* xxii, 90-92.

<sup>218</sup> V. N. x, xii. It may be remarked that St. Thomas uses the term "*simulacra*" for false idols. Cf. e. g., *I Cor.*, lect. i, me°; *Isa.* x, me°.

<sup>219</sup> *Purg.* xxii, 92-93; xxi, 67-68; xxii, 34-54.

<sup>220</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 2.



the second count of Statius's guilt, prodigality, may also, in a spiritual sense, apply to Dante. For he who worships the false idols of present pleasure,<sup>221</sup> exchanges the "gold" of heavenly treasure for the dross of earthly, and is so guilty of the worst prodigality. And finally, Dante's term, "thirst" of Beatrice, finally appeased, corresponds to the Beatitude spoken by the angel releasing souls from the circle where Statius expiated his prodigality.<sup>222</sup>

This spiritual parallelism between Statius and Dante has no further significance, so far as I can see, than to supply the key to Virgil's rôle in the poem. He accompanies Dante and Virgil the rest of the purgatorial way, and later with Dante receives the benefits of Lethe and Eunoë; after which we hear no more of him. But we may apply the key he has given us.

When Beatrice in her charity condescended for Dante's sake to Virgil in Limbo, she gave implicit promise of supernatural aid to Virgil,—an aid which he from beginning to end acknowledges. In hell his references are mysterious,<sup>223</sup> but in the clearer light of

<sup>221</sup> *Purg.* xxxi, 34-36.

<sup>222</sup> *Purg.* xxii, 1-6.

<sup>223</sup> E. g. *Inf.* viii, 105; ix, 8; xii, 88.

purgatory they become more definite. To Sordello he declares:

"Virtù del ciel mi mosse, e con lei vegno."<sup>224</sup>

Supernatural aid is grace, but it is given to Virgil, not for himself, but for Dante. It moved him, and accompanies him, but is not in him.<sup>225</sup> In other words, the "grace freely given" to the actual Virgil for the benefit of others is that supernatural aid, thanks to which the Virgil of the *Comedy* is enabled to guide Dante up to Beatrice, representative of the Charity of the Christ whom the actual Virgil had unwittingly prophesied.<sup>226</sup> Only, since this grace does not illuminate Virgil's own faculty of reason, Dante presents it as detached and hypostatized in the person of Lucia, the light emanating from Mary. And, though unseen by Dante, Lucia accompanies him and Virgil through purgatory, where

<sup>224</sup> *Purg.* vii, 24.

<sup>225</sup> Beatrice's promise to Virgil, that

"Quando sarò dinanzi al Signor mio,  
Di te mi loderò sovente a lui,"

(*Inf.* ii, 73-74) may indicate a hopeful conviction on Dante's part that Virgil, for his noble character and prophetic service, may ultimately have been made acceptable to God by imputed merit.

<sup>226</sup> Beatrice represents the charity of Christ as well as of Mary, since Mary's own charity is of Christ.

Virgil is not at home, and intervenes when and in such wise as his merely rational faculty is insufficient. Thus, though Dante has passed secure from hell, the place of mortal sins, yet he has fallen asleep in the valley of the negligent.<sup>227</sup> Virgil of his own rational faculty is incompetent to lead him thence to and through the gate of the Christian purgatory, of which the principle is penitence acceptable of God. Penitence would give satisfaction to God for past sins, and so reconcile the sinner to God.<sup>228</sup> It is a virtue, therefore, unknown to a rationalism which cannot recognize God.<sup>229</sup> So to the sleeping Dante in the valley of the negligent, whose befitting psalm is the *Te lucis ante*,<sup>230</sup> Light, *Lux*, comes in the person of the lady Lucia. She it is whom the angel at the gate demands for "escort" to the penitent. Mary's light can enter in through the narrowest gate.<sup>231</sup> And by her light also, the least sin is

<sup>227</sup> *Purg.* ix, 10-12.

<sup>228</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* III, lxxxv, 3.

<sup>229</sup> "Philosophi nihil tractaverunt de poenitentia, quia consideraverunt virtutes secundum quod ordinant hominem ad bonum humanum, non autem ut ordinant homines ad Deum." St. Thomas, *IV Sent.* xiv, 1, 1, 3, 4<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>230</sup> *Purg.* viii, 13.

<sup>231</sup> "Maria *lux* . . . quia per angustissimam rimam vel foramen ingreditur, gratiam infundendo. Unde dicit

made visible to the sinner, so that he may purify himself of it.<sup>232</sup>

Meanwhile the sleeping Dante's imagination converts the supernatural elevation of his soul into a dream. A golden eagle swoops down upon him, "*terribil come fulgor*," and carries him upward into consuming fire.<sup>233</sup> The dream was just before the dawn, when dreams come true. And indeed this symbolic dream was prophetic of many true happenings, and is a capital instance of Dante's packed and multiple allegory. The eagle, as he presently learns, is Lucia, light of Mary's grace bringing penitent self-knowledge and the will to enter into the purgatorial fire.<sup>234</sup> Again, it is Lucia, light of faith leading to charity, Beatrice, which is a fire so intense

cum Filio illud Apocalypsis, iii, 20: *Si quis mihi aperuit januam, intrabo ad illum.*" Albert. Mag., op. cit. VII, x, 1.

<sup>232</sup> "Maria lux . . . quia rimas et angustissima foramina sua illustratione manifestat existentibus in domo, id est, minima peccata suae gratiae infusione facit perceptibilia his qui convertuntur ad cor. . . . Roganda est igitur assidue ut cordibus nostris infundat gratiam divini timoris: quia, sicut dicitur, Eccli. xxi, 7: *Qui timet Deum, convertetur ad cor suum*, ut per illustrationem gratiae suae possimus intelligere nostrorum cordium foramina et scissuras, et eadem resarcire." Ib.

<sup>233</sup> *Purg.* ix, 13-33.

<sup>234</sup> *Purg.* xxvii, 7-12.

that, reglowing in the mind, it fuses "stony" reason<sup>235</sup> into intuitive intelligence. Beatrice, like the mother eagle, will enure her eaglet's eyes to look straight into the sun. So the reënacted rape of Ganymede foreshadows the "rapture" of Dante, in which he can look straight into the unimaginable glory of the divine Sun. And he uses the same word "fulgor" for the Eagle's glory and God's.<sup>236</sup> The analogy is natural, since the final cause, the "rapture," is contained in the efficient cause, the "rape."<sup>237</sup> Again, Lucia as the Light emanating from Mary, corresponds, figuratively speaking, to Christ, Mary's Son; and of the Christ it is said that like an eagle he swoops down upon the sinner to bear him into the Empyrean, the heaven of fire.<sup>238</sup>

<sup>235</sup> Cf. *Purg.* xxxiii, 73-75.

<sup>236</sup> *Purg.* ix, 29; *Par.* xxxiii, 141.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, I *Sent.* i, 1.

<sup>238</sup> "Christus *aquila* . . . Dicit etiam Isidorus, quod cum aquila super maria penna feratur immobili, nec humanis pateat obtutibus, de tanta sublimitate pisciculos videt natantes, ac tormenti instar descendens pennis, ad littus attrahit raptam praedam. Similiter Christus in solio paternae majestatis existens invisibilis, de coelo respexit filios hominum oculo pietatis errantes in mari, id est, in mundo, et descendit quasi ex improvise in sua incarnatione, ut ipsos praedatos a diabolo praedaretur, et eos perduceret ad littus vitae aeternae." Albert. Mag., op. cit. XII, vii, ii, 2.

Again, the Light which is Christ is reflected in the Word, in Scripture, illuminated by which we are saved.<sup>239</sup> And more especially is it reflected in the word of John, Christ's "Eagle,"<sup>240</sup> so called because he saw deepest into the divine glory.<sup>241</sup>

Only this once does Lucia, in her own person, intervene in the action of the poem.<sup>242</sup> But as Virgil told Sordello:

"Virtù del ciel mi mosse, e con lei vegno."

How then is this guiding influence manifested? Remembering the symbolism of Mary as the Sun, and of Lucia as her light-ray, the answer, in the light of Dante's indications, seems clear. At the very outset, Dante had seen beyond the dim vale of fear a hill whose shoulders were

<sup>239</sup> *Par.* v, 76-78.

<sup>240</sup> *Par.* xxvi, 53. Cf. *ib.* 43-45.

<sup>241</sup> "Aquila beatus Joannes Evangelista . . . quia solem intuetur in rota: et iste specialius deitatis contemplatus est arcana. Unde dixit: *In principio erat Verbum*. Alii quasi infirmis oculis solem, id est, Christum videbant in nube, id est, velatum carne." Albert. Mag., *op. cit.* XII, vii, ii, 5.

<sup>242</sup> She may well, as the counselling companion of Virgil, be intended in the "donna santa e presta" of *Purg.* xix, 26; but in any case her appearance is only in Dante's dream.

"Vestito già de'raggi del pianeta  
Che mena dritto altrui per ogni calle." <sup>243</sup>

The first sight to "bring back delight" to his eyes, after his emergence from the murk of hell, is

"Lo bel pianeta che ad amar conforta." <sup>244</sup>

The sole direction given by Cato for guidance of the pilgrims is to follow the sun.<sup>245</sup> So Virgil, fixing his gaze upon the sun, appeals for its guidance.<sup>246</sup> And at last he commits his *alumnus* to its guidance alone.<sup>247</sup> Effectively then, the promised guidance of Lucia is fulfilled by "the rays of the planet that leadeth each one straight by every way." Only by following such leading can one rise towards God, the divine Sun. Hence the law of the Mount, that no one may ascend by night.<sup>248</sup>

Virgil's task finished, Lucia shines in the sevenfold candelabrum of the Christian Church, lighting the soul in the way of duty, obedience to Law.<sup>249</sup> Then appears

<sup>243</sup> *Inf.* i, 17-18.

<sup>244</sup> *Purg.* i, 19.

<sup>245</sup> *Purg.* 107-108.

<sup>246</sup> *Purg.* xiii, 13-21.

<sup>247</sup> *Purg.* xxvii, 133.

<sup>248</sup> *Purg.* vii, 52-57.

<sup>249</sup> *Purg.* xxx, 1-6.

Beatrice as, says Dante, "I have seen at dawn

". . . la faccia del sol nascere ombrata,  
Sì che per temperanza di vapori  
L'occhio la sostenea lunga fiata." <sup>250</sup>

Under the guidance now of Charity, the education of his intuitive vision begins. She is as the sun, yet veiled for his as yet weak eyes. As he and she rise into paradise, she is the eagle, he the eaglet. Her eyes are fixed upon the divine Sun, his upon its image in hers; and by that gaze he is "transhumanized." <sup>251</sup> And what power accomplished the miracle is told in the immediately following tercet:

"S'io era sol di me quel che crëasti  
Novellamente, Amor che il ciel governi,  
Tu il sai, che col tuo lume mi levasti."

Beatrice's eyes reflect the "love which governs heaven," and this reflected light it is that "transhumanizes" Dante. What passes from her eyes to his is the power of seeing which Love gives. And once more Dante explains the process.<sup>252</sup> Beatrice has again

<sup>250</sup> *Purg.* xxx, 25-27.

<sup>251</sup> *Par.* i, 46-72.

<sup>252</sup> I may plead his example for the repetitive character of this paper. Yet in spite of all Dante's repetitions, he is still misunderstood!



turned upon him her eyes "*pieni di faville d'amor*." But his, too weak to withstand the glory, are downcast. She explains:

"S'io ti fiammeggio nel caldo d'amore  
 Di là dal modo che in terra si vede,  
 Sì che degli occhi tuoi vinco il valore,  
 Non ti maravigliar; chè ciò procede  
 Da perfetto veder, che, come apprende,  
 Così nel bene appreso move il piede.  
 Io veggio ben sì come già risplende  
 Nello intelletto tuo l'eterna luce  
 Che, vista sola, sempre amore accende." <sup>253</sup>

Again it must be said that although vision, whether of faith or revelation, precedes charity "in the order of generation," yet "in the order of perfection charity precedes faith and hope, inasmuch as faith as well as hope is formed by charity, and acquires the perfection of virtue; so charity is the mother of all virtues, and the root, inasmuch as it is the form of all virtues." <sup>254</sup> Only gradually can Dante's eyes accommodate themselves to the glory reflected from Beatrice's. <sup>255</sup> And the stages of improvement are carefully indi-

<sup>253</sup> *Par.* v, 1-9.

<sup>254</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxii, 4, c. Obviously, this is the meaning of *Purg.* xxix, 127-129.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xxiv, 3.

cated.<sup>256</sup> Finally, he is enabled also to endure her smile, that appeared

“come sole in viso che più trema.”<sup>257</sup>

With that her task ends. His eyes have drunk up the fullest glory of the Sun that she can reflect upon him. She graduates him from her school, as Virgil before had from his. So disciplined and strengthened, he can now turn undaunted from the reflection to the thing itself which is reflected. After Beatrice has assured him that he can now withstand the double glory of her eyes and smile, and he has proved it,<sup>258</sup> she urges him to dare the intenser glory of the fair garden flowering under the rays of Christ.<sup>259</sup> Later, without awaiting invitation, as if conscious of his independent strength, he turns from the dazzling point of light mirrored in his lady's eyes, to look directly at the reality. The point itself, from which

“Depende il cielo e tutta la natura,”<sup>260</sup>

is indeed the divine Sun, but still, as its

<sup>256</sup> Cf. especially *Par.* xxi, 1-12; xxiii, 46-60.

<sup>257</sup> *Par.* xxx, 13-33.

<sup>258</sup> *Par.* xxiii, 46-60.

<sup>259</sup> *Ib.* 70-75.

<sup>260</sup> *I.* 42.

punctual size proves, afar off in its empyrean. His eyes endure its direct ray, yet still with difficulty.<sup>261</sup> Once again, risen into the Empyrean, her countenance mirrors for him the divine Sun's glory in its own place.<sup>262</sup> The point of light has expanded, and is seen to be triune. It is "pure light," yet

"Luce intellettüal piena d'amore,  
Amor di vero ben pien di letizia,  
Letizia che trascende ogni dolzore." <sup>263</sup>

The "intellectual light full of love" is in her eyes; the "love of true good" is in her smile; the "joy which transcends every grief" is in both. And Dante, who can sustain the triple glory, possesses therefore the angelic faculty, the *intelletto d'amore*, intuitive spiritual insight; and to possess the bliss of this insight, he has but to be presented to the supreme object of its operation, God.

Beatrice by her power of love has so actualized in Dante his own potential intuitive faculty. It exists with him separately and independently, and may be conceived as a distinct entity. Bernard is the hypostasis of

<sup>261</sup> Ib. 16-18.

<sup>262</sup> *Par.* xxx, 10-33.

<sup>263</sup> *Par.* xxx, 40-42.

this figurative entity, this "higher reason," *in Dante*, the operation of which is by contemplation withdrawn into itself.<sup>264</sup> Beatrice and Bernard, then, both represent the *Intelletto d'Amore*; but Beatrice as it is in the angels, Bernard as it is in man "by participation."<sup>265</sup>

Bernard, then, represents the required mode of seeing God face to face, of knowing his essence; and so Bernard at once explains his presence:

"A terminar lo tuo disiro  
Mosse Beatrice me del loco mio." <sup>266</sup>

And he adds more fully:

"Acciò che tu assommi  
Perfettamente," disse, "il tuo cammino,  
A che prego ed amor santo mandommi,  
Vola con gli occhi per questo giardino;  
Chè veder lui t'acconcerà lo sguardo  
Più al montar per lo raggio divino." <sup>267</sup>

<sup>264</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 46-48.

<sup>265</sup> ". . . quamvis cognitio humanae animae proprie sit per viam rationis, est tamen in ea aliqua participatio illius simplicis cognitionis quae in substantiis superioribus invenitur, ex quo vim intellectivam habere dicuntur." St. Thomas, *De ver.* XV, i, c, me°. Cf. the analogous distinction between Beatrice as Charity *in patria*, and the personification of Charity *in via*. Cf. above, p. 163.

<sup>266</sup> *Par.* xxxi, 65-66.

<sup>267</sup> *Ib.* 94-99.

His phrase "*acconcerà lo sguardo*" expresses exactly that gradual "accommodation" of sight to ever intenser light which all along has been the symbolic principle of Dante's education. Lucia is the hypostatized light; Beatrice the hypostatized love by which Dante's sight is accommodated.

But Lucia and Beatrice both draw their efficiency from Mary, are but the light and heat of her glory. And Mary, though a "sun," an original source of light, to mankind, is, in relation to God, the one true Sun, as a moon, shining by reflected light also. But of all created things, the moon is likest the sun, and the brightest after it.<sup>268</sup> Also, of the planets it is nearest to the sun; and there is nothing intermediate between it and the sun.<sup>269</sup> Also, eyes that cannot look upon the sun, can look upon the moon.<sup>270</sup> And in saying this, Albert adduces the authority of St. Bernard lauding

<sup>268</sup> "*Maria luna . . . quia nihil tam simile soli quam luna, non tamen omnino similis. Nullum enim luminare tantum habet luminositatis, quantum sol, cujus luminositatem luna vicinius aemulatur.*" Albert. Mag., op. cit. VII, iv, 2.

<sup>269</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>270</sup> "*In luna, id est, Maria splendor misericordiae sine fervore severitatis: quia non offendit infirmos oculos se respicientis, sicut fervor solis.*" *Ib.*

the Virgin's charity, from the "heat" of which nothing can hide itself.<sup>271</sup>

From this passage of Albert's Dante might have drawn his authority and his instrument for the final "accommodation."<sup>272</sup> If Mary vouchsafe to Dante's eyes the power to see *her* face to face, no further increment of power is possible or needed: the alumnus may be ushered into the very presence of God. So it is done. The Virgin is gracious to Dante because, burning with love of her through Beatrice, he has become spiritually one with her "*fedel Bernardo*."<sup>273</sup> He is able to keep his gaze "fixed and attent" on that "hot heat" of her glory.<sup>274</sup>

That which makes man's reason discursive is his corporeal nature. His intellect, in its own nature intuitive, must grope from datum to datum of sense. Before therefore he can attain the perception of disembodied intel-

<sup>271</sup> "Denique omnibus omnia facta est . . . ut non sit qui se abscondat a calore ejus." *Ib.*, referring to *Ib.* IV, xxxv.

<sup>272</sup> Albert's words are not cited as a necessary literary source. They merely summarize a current symbolism. St. Bernard also was by common consent regarded as the high apostle of Mary.

<sup>273</sup> *Par.* xxxi, 100-102.

<sup>274</sup> *Ib.* 133-142.

lects, he must cast off the body. Before he can see as the immortals, he must put off mortality. Naturally, this detachment is by what we call death. But by special grace, mortal man may be granted the separation of soul from body momentarily, and yet have them reunited again for his appointed time on earth. In the interim his soul may see God. This is "rapture," and it is for this that Bernard prays the Virgin in Dante's behalf,—this, and for safeguarding the perfect charity that must follow the beatific vision.<sup>275</sup> For in this life, charity, even perfectly possessed, may be lost.<sup>276</sup>

Mary hears Bernard's prayer, and grants Dante a power of vision connatural with hers.<sup>277</sup> With the "*valore*" of the Mother, he can meet the "*valore infinito*" of the Father as closely as any finite power can; and he stresses the unspeakable boon by a curious paradox. Whereas always before, his weak eyes had sought relief from excess of light by turning away, or closing, now it seems to him that they would be blinded *if* turned away.<sup>278</sup>

<sup>275</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 28–36.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II–II, xxiv, 11.

<sup>277</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 49–57.

<sup>278</sup> *Ib.* 76–91.

It is obvious that the Dante of the *Comedy* is no mere representative man, no mere representative Christian, as is sometimes said.<sup>279</sup> Indeed, he has but one certain peer among all men,—the apostle Paul, even the one with whom he had at first modestly disclaimed likeness. A second St. Paul, he comes down from the third heaven to declare unto men so much of what he has seen there as mortal faculty can retain and communicate.<sup>280</sup> Lucia, the Light of Mary, does not merely accompany him, as she did Virgil; she has entered into him. Beatrice, the Love of Mary, inflames his will, not only towards beatitude, but also to loving-service of his fellow-men.<sup>281</sup> So is fulfilled through Beatrice's true *salute*—or salvation at last conferred, the promise of her *salute*—or salutation, so long withheld.<sup>282</sup> Moreover, Lucia and Beatrice were but instruments, light and love but manifestations, of a central Power, a radiant Sun, in Dante's soul, which is the effluence of the Virgin

<sup>279</sup> Cf., e. g., Paget Toynbee, *Concise Dante Dictionary*, s. n. *Dante*.

<sup>280</sup> *Par.* i, 4-12.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xxv, 11.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. *V. N.* xi.



Mother, Queen of heaven and Empress of the universe. In the last analysis, the accepted spiritual suitor of Beatrice is the accepted servant of Mary. Who worships the ray of the sun, worships the sun. Without impeachment of his faith to Beatrice, therefore, he composes his poem in the very spirit of Bonaventure's psalm:

"Dilexi Matrem Dei Domini mei: et lux miserationum ejus infulsit mihi.

Circumdederunt me dolores mortis: et visitatio Mariae laetificavit me.

Dolorem et periculum incurri: et recreatus sum gratia illius.

Nomen ejus et memoriale illius sit in medio cordis nostri: et non nocebit nobis ictus malignantis.

Convertere, anima mea, in laudem ipsius: et invenes refrigerium in novissimis tuis." <sup>283</sup>

<sup>283</sup> *Psalt. maj. b. Mar. Virg.*, Ps. 114.

## THE COMEDY OF DANTE<sup>1</sup>

The title of the book, wrote Dante to Can Grande, is: *Incipit Comoedia Dantis Aligherii, Florentini natione, non moribus*. The Latin *Comoedia Dantis* means "the Comedy of Dante" as well as "the Comedy by Dante." I believe that Dante was quite aware of this ambiguity, and intends both of its alternative meanings at once.<sup>2</sup> The poem was his *Comedy* in that he wrote it. The poem was *his* "comedy" in that it relates how from a state at the beginning "horrible and foul," he, the protagonist, came to a state at the end "prosperous, desirable, and gracious." And such is the order of any "comedy."<sup>3</sup> His purpose in telling his story is to lead others living in this life along the same road from a state of misery to a state of felicity.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *Studies in Philology*, Oct., 1921.

<sup>2</sup> The epithet "Divine" was given first in the edition of 1555, and its retention is, I think, a literary impertinence. Even if the contention in the present text is unwarranted, there can at least be no question that when a writer who so weighed and packed every item of his work gave a title, he meant it and meant something by it.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, par. xv.

Again, to take Dante at his own word, we should consider as part of his title the bitter qualifying phrase—*Florentini natione, non moribus*. The surface meaning is obvious enough; but if the poem itself has a multiple meaning,<sup>5</sup> might we not expect the title also to bear a deeper sense than meets the eye?

When Dante declares himself "Florentine in stock, not morals," he speaks after the redeeming experiences related in his poem. He has risen not only above his original state, but also above the state of his origin. His original state was the state of sin; the state of his origin, the city of Florence, was a city of sin. This analogy may appear exaggeratedly fanciful, as well as unjust, but it is brought out continually in the poem itself. Florence, we are told, is

"la città, che di colui è pianta  
Che pria volse le spalle al suo Fattore."<sup>6</sup>

So planted by Satan, it has sprouted in envy,  
and flowered in greed:

"E da cui è la invidia tanto pianta,—  
Produce e spande il maledetto fiore

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, par. vii.

<sup>6</sup> *Par.* ix, 127-128.

Ch'ha disviäte le pecore e gli agni,  
Però che fatto ha lupo del pastore.”<sup>7</sup>

It is “the nest of malice.”<sup>8</sup> It is blown up with pride.<sup>9</sup> Bestiality is the mark of those Florentines who accompanied Dante into exile.<sup>10</sup> Now so is the City of Dis, of Satan,<sup>11</sup> the abiding-place of “malice and mad bestiality,”<sup>12</sup> the prison-house of those whose guilt was due, not to the less culpable incontinence of desire or temper, but to envy and malice. It would seem, therefore, that Dante represents his exile from Florence as a providential escape, quite comparable to his rescue from the three wild beasts of the dark forest. He even refers to Florence as a “sad forest” full of wolves.<sup>13</sup> But the exact return to the taunt of his title is his self-gratulation in heaven itself:

“Io, che al divino dall'umano,  
All'eterno dal tempo era venuto,

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.* 129-132. *Fiore* is literally the florin, allegorically the greed of which the florin is cause and emblem. For *envy* as a Florentine characteristic, cf. *Inf.* vi, 49; xv, 68.

<sup>8</sup> *Inf.* xv, 78.

<sup>9</sup> *Inf.* xvi, 75.

<sup>10</sup> *Par.* xvii, 62.

<sup>11</sup> *Inf.* xi, 65.

<sup>12</sup> *Inf.* xi, 82-83.

<sup>13</sup> *Purg.* xiv, 49-51, 64.

E di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano,  
Dì che stupor dovea esser compiuto!" <sup>14</sup>

Against this implication that the evil and arrogant men who banned him from his birthplace were after all unwitting instruments of Providence working for his salvation, may be alleged his desire and hope of return.

"Se mai continga che il poema sacro,—  
Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,  
Sì che m'ha fatto per più anni macro,—  
Vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra  
Del bello ovile ov'io dormii agnello  
Nimico ai lupi che gli danno guerra,  
Con altra voce amai, con altro vello  
Ritornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte  
Del mio battesimo prenderò il cappello;  
Però che nella Fede, che fa conte  
L'anime a Dio, quivi entra'io, e poi  
Pietro per lei sì mi girò la fronte." <sup>15</sup>

Superficially, indeed, the passage would mean simply that, won over by the splendor of his literary accomplishment, his fellow-citizens might one day readmit him to citizenship, and even crown him as poet at the baptismal font at which, a child, he had been admitted

<sup>14</sup> *Par.* xxxi, 37-40.

<sup>15</sup> *Par.* xxv, 1-12.

into the membership of the Church. But there are manifest hints of a deeper meaning. In that old time he had slumbered a lamb among wolves, their "enemy" indeed, but also their helpless victim. They had successfully "fleeced" and banned him. But one day his holy poem, mighty with the might of heaven as well as of earth, may "conquer"—not merely soften or appease, but conquer—their cruelty. Then will he return "with another voice, another fleece," and at the font of his baptism put on the chaplet. To understand what is implied in the word "conquer," we should recall what Dante declared to be the purpose of the *Comedy*, namely, "to remove those living in this life from a state of misery, and to bring them to a state of felicity."<sup>16</sup> In other words, its purpose was to convert men to Christ, the Lamb of God.<sup>17</sup> And he, Dante, has by the Vicar of Christ, St. Peter, been given the sign of the aureole of the Lamb's apostle and prophet to men:

"Pietro per lei (*la Fede*) sì mi cirò la fronte."<sup>18</sup>

Poet as he is, therefore, he speaks, and will

<sup>16</sup> *Ep.* x, 268–270—ed. Moore, in *Opere*.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Par.* xxiv, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Par.* xxiv, 148–154.

speak, "with another voice," the voice of a prophet. Also, he will be clothed "with another fleece,"—that of the Lamb himself, which figuratively signifies, among other things, the humility which shall be exalted.<sup>19</sup> The "chaplet," accordingly, which he shall put on at the baptismal font, while to the general it may signify the glory of a poet, rightly understood will be sign and symbol of the aureole awaiting him as prophet and doctor of the Faith, and already conferred in the mystic vision symbolically by St. Peter.<sup>20</sup> But he will return to Florence, speaking with the voice of the Lamb, only as Christ himself descended into hell as

"Un possente  
 Con segno di vittoria coronato;" <sup>21</sup>

or as he and Virgil, accompanied with that other "agnello," <sup>22</sup> forced their way into the

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Albertus Magnus, *De laudibus b. Mariae Virg.*, XII, v, viii, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *IV Sent.* xxxiii, 3, 3, 3: "Aureola debetur doctoribus, et praedicatoribus, tantum docentibus ex officio vel commissione." Dante represents himself commissioned both by Beatrice (*Purg.* xxxiii, 52-54) and by St. Peter (*Par.* xxvii, 64-66).

<sup>21</sup> *Inf.* iv, 53-54.

<sup>22</sup> Dante uses *agnello* for both "angel" and "lamb." Cf. *Purg.* xvi, 16; *Par.* xxiv, 2.

city of Dis, whose "lamentable houses" had been before denied them.<sup>23</sup> And then, as Christ from hell drew Adam and Abel and Noah,

"Ed altri molti; e fecegli beati;" <sup>24</sup>

so Dante would "bring to a state of felicity" those Florentines willing to heed the prophesyings of his *Comedy*. As for the rest,—*vae victis!* For in rejecting him, they reject Christ's apostle.

This is a bold saying, but Dante says no less. At the same time, he realized that one so declaring prophetic mission, must present his credentials, must in some sort prove his inspiration. St. Paul had written: "Who-soever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they

<sup>23</sup> *Inf.* viii-ix. It may be noted in passing that the angel, like Dante, is "disdainful;" (*Inf.* ix, 88. Cf. *Inf.* viii, 44) and that the "insolence" (*tracotanza*) of the evil ones in opposing the entry of Dante and Virgil into the infernal city had before been shown in opposing the entry of Christ into hell (*Inf.* viii, 124-126) and is paralleled by the insolence of the Florentines in barring Dante from their city.

<sup>24</sup> *Inf.* iv, 55-61.



have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?"<sup>25</sup> Also, it is written: "A true witness delivereth souls; but a deceitful witness speaketh lies."<sup>26</sup> A man, however, may deceive himself as well as others. How might Dante himself know that he was a preacher *sent*, that he was in St. John's phrase, "a true and faithful witness?"<sup>27</sup> And, even knowing it, persuade others to listen to him?

Although the whole *Comedy* is an answer to this question, within the *Comedy* there is yet one declarative passage specially calculated to win the favorable attention of his readers. This passage is the "exordium," as he calls it, of the *Paradise*, which runs as follows:

"La gloria di colui che tutto move  
 Per l'universo penetra, e risplende  
 In una parte più, e meno altrove.  
 Nel ciel che più della sua luce prende

<sup>25</sup> *Rom.* x, 13-15.

<sup>26</sup> *Prov.* xiv, 25. *Vulg.*: "Liberat animas testis fidelis: et profert mendacia versipellis." Geryon, symbol of Fraud or Mendacity, who "tanto benigna avea di fuor la pelle," would seem to be a reminiscence of the "versipellis" of this text.

<sup>27</sup> *Rev.* iii, 14. *Vulg.*: "testis fidelis et verus."

Fu'io, e vidi cose che ridire  
 Nè sa nè può chi di lassù discende;  
 Perchè, appressando sè al suo disire,  
 Nostro intelletto si profonda tanto  
 Che retro la memoria non può ire.  
 Veramente quant'io del regno santo  
 Nella mia mente potei far tesoro  
 Sarà ora matera del mio canto." <sup>28</sup>

To explain and reënforce this exordium, to drive home its high significance for those capable of understanding, is the real focus and point of Dante's Epistle to Can Grande. Since such interpretation of the Epistle is certainly not self-evident, however, I must try to justify it.

The Epistle, the authenticity of which is now generally accepted,<sup>29</sup> has three parts,—epistolary, doctrinal, expository.<sup>30</sup> Or, in plainer words, Dante begins with a personal address to his patron; then, under six heads, he gives an account of the poem as an organic whole including the Paradise; and finally proceeds to an exposition of the literal sense of the "Prologue" <sup>31</sup> of the *Paradise*.

<sup>28</sup> *Par.* I, 1-12.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Paget Toynbee in his edition of the work, Oxford, 1920.

<sup>30</sup> These are Paget Toynbee's terms.

<sup>31</sup> *Par.* i, 1-36.

What must, I think, strike every thoughtful reader is the apparently capricious manner of treatment, especially in the so-called expository part. The doctrinal part at least covers the ground in outline; but it is expansive often over seemingly plain matters, and puzzlingly laconic where the reader would welcome help. The expository part discusses with philosophical subtlety and apologetic amplitude the first part of the Prologue, the exordium, then, after a mere perfunctory division of the second part of the Prologue, the "invocation," breaks off lamely, alleging as excuse anxiety as to the author's "domestic affairs."

Superficially regarded, what Dante appears to be offering to his patron is a sample,—one might almost say, a bait. The reference to his "*rei familiaris angustia*" can be hardly other than a none too subtly insinuated appeal to the Magnifico's generosity. To produce the goods indicated by the sample, to expound the whole poem, or even the whole *Paradise*, on the scale adopted for the exordium, would be a long labor, yet assuredly one of "public utility." Dante will gladly undertake it, *if* . . . Can Grande's "magnificence" will but provide!

This conception of the Epistle may be true

as far as it goes. On the other hand, it is also true that the Epistle is presented as an objectively right foreword to the poem itself.<sup>32</sup> Let us examine the argument more closely.

"There are six points, then, as to which enquiry must be made at the beginning of every didactic work; namely, the subject, the author, the form, the aim, the title of the book, and the branch of philosophy to which it belongs."<sup>33</sup> So Dante prepares for the doctrinal part of his commentary, conformably with the usual rhetorical rules. His six categories, however, are not on the same plane. The first four derive, as Pietro Alighieri asserts,<sup>34</sup> from Aristotle's precept: "*Scire est rem per causas cognoscere.*" The causes of anything fall into four categories,—efficient, material, formal, and final. This fourfold principle of causation gives Dante his first four topics, the first two being inverted in order, namely, subject, author,<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Ep.* x, 73-74.

<sup>33</sup> *Ib.* 118-122.

<sup>34</sup> *Commentarium*, ed. Florence, 1895, pp. 2-3. Pietro's *Prologus*, or introductory lecture, appears to be an interpretative amplification of the doctrinal part of Dante's Epistle.

<sup>35</sup> By *agente*, Dante almost surely also intends himself as protagonist.

form, and aim. His two last categories—title and branch of philosophy—are usually added, says Pietro, "*magistraliter*," that is, as a matter of teaching practice. In principle, the information conveyed under them would naturally come out under one or other of the first four topics, since to know the causes of anything completely is to know that thing completely. The two supplementary topics only serve for added clarity and convenience of exposition.

The first or determining cause in any action is the final cause, the author's aim.<sup>36</sup> The aim which moved Dante, as *author*, to treat a certain *subject-matter*, "the state of souls after death," in the *form* of the *Comedy*, was, as he said, "to remove those living in this life from a state of misery, and to bring them to a state of felicity." To that end he will show them the state of supreme misery, to wit, the state of damned souls after death, and the state of supreme felicity, to wit, the state of blessed souls after death. The Epistle itself defines only the latter state: ". . . true blessedness consists in the apprehension of Him who is the beginning of truth, as appears from what John says: 'This is life eternal, to know thee

<sup>36</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, i, 3, c.

the true God,' etc.; and from what Boethius says in his third book *On Consolation*: "To behold thee is the end." This saying of Boethius, "*Te cernere finis*," is thus a brief but exact definition of the end to which Dante would bring "those living in this life."

To bring his hearers to this good end, however, he must first, as has been said, induce them to listen to him. To offer the needed inducement is the business of what the Rhetoricians call an exordium. "To make a good exordium three things are requisite, as Tully says in his *New Rhetoric*; that the hearer, namely, should be rendered favorably disposed, attentive, and willing to learn; and this is especially needful in the case of a subject which is out of the common, as Tully himself remarks."<sup>37</sup> Dante's subject is indeed "out of the common" (*admirabilis*); "for he declares that he will relate such things as he who beheld them in the first heaven was able to retain." This declaration by itself, continues Dante, fulfils the threefold purpose of his exordium; "for the profitableness of what he is about to be told begets a favorable disposition in the hearer; its being out of the common engages his attention; and its being

<sup>37</sup> *Ep.* x, par. xix.

within the range of possibility renders him willing to learn.”<sup>38</sup> Having said this, Dante immediately repeats it; and later, concluding the detailed exposition of the exordium, again he repeats that “the author says that he will relate concerning the celestial kingdom such things as he was able to retain; and he says that this is the subject of his work.”<sup>39</sup>

“*Et hoc dicit materiam sui operis.*” It will be observed that Dante has silently amended his previous definition of the “subject” (*subjectum*), or “subject-matter” (*materia*),<sup>40</sup> of his poem, or at any rate of the *Paradise*. Previously he had declared his subject to be “the state of blessed souls after death.”<sup>41</sup> And this definition is often quoted by critics without apparent recognition of its curious inadequacy. It is as if one should define the subject of *Hamlet* as “the something rotten in the state of Denmark,” and altogether ignore Hamlet himself. The real subject of the *Paradise* is, on the contrary, “the state of blessed souls after death”—*which Dante saw*,

<sup>38</sup> “Nam in utilitate dicendorum benevolentia paratur; in admirabilitate attentio; in possibilitate docilitas.”

<sup>39</sup> *Ep.* x, par. xxx.

<sup>40</sup> Either term would indicate the *causa materialis*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ib.* 231–238.

and so far as he could retained in mind. And, as Dante by reiteration emphasizes, it is just the amending clauses that make his exordium a perfect one, capable of making the reader "*benevolum et attentum et docilem*," of moving the reader's desire and will equally with Dante's own; until the reader may come to say:

"già volgeva il mio disiro e il *velle*,  
Sì come ruota ch'egualmente è mossa,  
L'Amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle," <sup>42</sup>

as mediated for me through this "true and faithful witness." In other words, Dante will be to his reader what Beatrice had been to him.

To achieve his end, therefore,—the salvation of his hearer,—Dante's treatment of his general subject,—“the state of blessed souls after death,”—could not be impersonal and objective like Milton's treatment of heavenly life in *Paradise Lost*. Milton did indeed express a thought at least analogous to Dante's when he wrote that “He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem.” Therefore, Milton might

<sup>42</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 143-145.



have added, he need not announce his qualifications in his poem; his poem itself, by so much of nobility as it might possess, must prove him, its maker, to be noble. Dante's purpose,—the final cause which determined the form of his creation,—was different. He was concerned not merely, like Milton, "to declare the ways of God to men," by an argument, however lofty, based upon external authority, however compelling. He would present such an argument indeed, and would summon to its support the highest external authorities available, to wit, the self-revelation of God to men in Holy Scripture, as interpreted by Holy Church:

"Avete il vecchio e il nuovo Testamento,  
E il pastor della Chiesa che vi guida:  
Questo vi basti a vostro salvamento!"<sup>43</sup>

So far he is at one with Milton. But to appeal to men with such an argument alone might in a sense be regarded as a work of supererogation. His words just quoted would almost imply as much. For if the Bible and the direction of the Pope suffice for salvation, what need for his *Comedy*?

In answer, Dante might say that indeed he

<sup>43</sup> *Par.* v, 76-78.

neither could, nor would, add any least item to the body of the Faith as interpreted from the Bible by the Church. But, as he defined it,

“Fede è sustanzia di cose sperate,  
Ed argomento delle non parventi.” <sup>44</sup>

Yet if one has passed beyond faith to the certitude of knowledge, he can, as a witness, give testimony that must fortify the faith of others less favored of God. The “*sustanzia di cose sperate*” is the *sustanzia*, or subject-matter, of the *Comedy*, but its “*argomento*” is not “*delle non parventi*.” For Dante has seen these hoped-for things, even to their perfection in the direct and immediate vision of God, the cognition of his essence. And with Dante, as with St. Paul, it must be that God had vouchsafed this surpassing grace in order that he might be a witness unto men. St. Augustine had asked as to St. Paul: “*Cur non credamus quod tanto Apostolo, Doctori gentium, raptu usque ad ipsam excellentissimam visionem, voluerit Deus demonstrare vitam in qua post hanc vitam vivendum est in aeternum?*” <sup>45</sup> And St. Thomas adds that St. Paul was vouchsafed his “rapture” not that he himself

<sup>44</sup> *Par.* xxiv, 64-65.

might be blest, but that he might be a witness of blessedness.<sup>46</sup> Moreover no more than St. Paul does Dante pretend to have seen all that the blessed souls after death see, but only so much as might be useful to confirm men's faith.<sup>47</sup> For him and for his reader Love's injunction would still hold: "*Non domandar più che utile ti sia!*" What then he saw, and was able to retain in mind and to communicate of his supernatural vision, was that which would be useful for salvation both of himself and of others. And in effect this residual boon is summed in the last words of all of his message.<sup>48</sup> The *fulgore*, the divine glory of what he had seen, had penetrated into his heart, and there re-glowed as perfect charity, and perfect charity is the one thing needful for beatitude. If his true testimony, set forth with all the art and inspiration accorded to him, can by its reflected flame so kindle the hearts of his hearers, his appointed task is done.

<sup>45</sup> *X Super Genes. ad litteram*, lib. XII, cap. xxviii, c. me<sup>m</sup>. Quoted by St. Thomas, *De ver.* xiii, 3, 8.

<sup>46</sup> "Non enim rapiebatur ut esset beatus, sed ut esset beatitudinis testis." *Ib.* 8<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> "Nec tamen oportuit quod omnia in se experiretur quae beatis inerunt; sed ex his quae experiebatur, etiam alia scire posset." *Ib.*

<sup>48</sup> *Par.* xxxiii, 142-145.

Dante's supreme credential, then, one making the appeal of his exordium perfect, is that he has been an actual eye-witness of the divine things he will tell of, of the very Godhead itself. And it is that fact which makes his *Comedy* itself the most perfect of all "comedies" in that its curve of amelioration rises from the absolute zero of damnation apparently assured to the maximum of blessedness attainable in this life. He has been shown to stand alone with St. Paul in God's favor. No wonder he dares to call himself "your friend" to the "magnificent and victorious Lord Can Grande." "Why not?" he exclaims. "Since even between God and man friendship is in no wise impeded by inequality?"<sup>49</sup> No wonder Beatrice declares that the Church Militant has no son of greater hope than he;

"Però gli è concesso che d'Egitto  
Venga in Jerusalemme per vedere  
Anzi che il militar gli sia prescritto."<sup>50</sup>

No wonder the spirits met in purgatory and paradise, amazed at his mortal presence among them, reverently felicitate this special

<sup>49</sup> *Ep.* x, par. ii.

<sup>50</sup> *Par.* xxv, 55-57.

friend of God. Hugh Capet, for instance, declares himself eager to inform him,

“perchè tanta  
Grazia in te luce prima che sii morto.” <sup>51</sup>

Guido del Duca is more emphatic:

“O anima, che fitta  
Nel corpo ancora in ver lo ciel ten vai,  
Per carità ne consola, e ne ditta  
Onde vieni, e chi sei; chè tu ne fai  
Tanto maravigliar della tua grazia  
Quanto vuol cosa che non fu più mai.” <sup>52</sup>

And in paradise Beatrice commends him to the “company elect” as recipient of this most special grace:

“O sodalizio eletto alla gran cena  
Del benedetto Agnello, il qual vi ciba  
Sì che la vostra voglia è sempre piena,  
Se per grazia di Dio questi preliba  
Di quel che cade della vostra mensa,  
Prima che morte tempo gli prescriba,  
Ponete mente all’affezione immensa,  
E roratelo alquanto!” <sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Purg.* xx, 41-42.

<sup>52</sup> *Purg.* xiv, 10-15.

<sup>53</sup> *Par.* xxiv, 1-8.

St. Thomas strikes the same note of holy eulogy:

"Quando  
 Lo raggio della grazia, onde s'accende  
 Verace amore, e che poi cresce amando  
 Moltiplicato, in te tanto risplende  
 Che ti conduce su per quella scala  
 U'senza risalir nessun discende,  
 Qual ti negasse," etc.<sup>54</sup>

Such illustrations might be multiplied. But indeed everything in the poem is in its own fashion confirmative of the unique quality of the protagonist. Beatrice testifies to his exceptional endowment by nature and by grace.<sup>55</sup> If in such strength he fell, he fell like Lucifer, son of the morning.<sup>56</sup> In his conversion, she, the "miracle,"<sup>57</sup> effected a virtual miracle. And thereafter, the whole course of his spiritual progress is attended by virtual miracles. Demons and angels, sinners and saints, are diverted from their eternal occupations to his aid. Satan himself must permit his "shaggy side" to be used as a

<sup>54</sup> *Par.* x, 82-88.

<sup>55</sup> *Purg.* xxx, 109-117.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *ib.* 117-120, 136-138.

<sup>57</sup> *V. N.* xix, 39; *Par.* xviii, 63.

ladder. Dante's very modesty of disclaimer to Virgil:

"Io non Enea, io non Paolo sono," <sup>58</sup>

proves in the event a humility which specifically exalts him. For in the proof he shows himself privileged even as they. Like the one, he descended into the lowest hell; like the other, he ascended into the highest heaven; and he returned alive to earth. In effect, the Lord had sent a messenger unto him, as the Lord had sent Ananias to Saul; and what the Lord had said of Saul would apply also to Dante: ". . . he is a chosen vessel <sup>59</sup> unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." <sup>60</sup> And the messenger had in effect also said to him, as Ananias to Saul: "Brother, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with

<sup>58</sup> *Inf.* ii, 32.

<sup>59</sup> Dante uses the word of himself in *Par.* i, 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Acts* ix, 15-16. Revelation to Dante of what he must suffer for truth-telling is made especially through Cacciaguida—*Par.* xvii.

the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith.”<sup>61</sup> When Dante stands before St. John in heaven to profess the supreme Christian virtue of holy love, he is blind. His momentary blindness, like Saul’s,<sup>62</sup> is due to excess of light, in his case the effulgent glory of the spirit of the Apostle of Love. To reassure him, St. John declares that his sight is but “*smarrita e non defunta*,” and that Beatrice

“ha nello sguardo  
La virtù ch’ebbe la man d’Anania.”<sup>63</sup>

In other words, Dante explicitly asserts analogy between the conversion of Saul and his own. Also, there is another subtler analogy in one of the above passages from the *Acts*. Ananias said to Saul: “Brother, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” Bearing in mind the analogy between Ananias and Beatrice as instruments of the healing of Saul’s and

<sup>61</sup> *Ib.* 17-18.

<sup>62</sup> *Ib.* 3, 8-9.

<sup>63</sup> *Par.* xxvi, 11-12.



Dante's "confused" sight, we may recall the episode related in the *New Life*, chapter xxiv. There appeared to Dante, in the way as he came, Beatrice preceded by Giovanna, so-called, as Love explained to him, "*da quello Giovanni, lo qual precedette la verace Luce.*" And Love, Dante continues, added immediately afterward these words: "*E chi volesse sottilmente considerare, quella Beatrice chiamerebbe Amore, per molta somiglianza che ha meco.*" Manifestly, Beatrice is identified, in some sort, with light (*la verace luce*) and love. To the other St. John Dante declared that the healing of his eyes began when Beatrice entered their gateway "with the fire where-with I ever burn." This fire, which gives also light, is love.<sup>64</sup> And, figuratively speaking, Beatrice entering into Dante with the fire of holy love is in principle equivalent to the Holy Ghost entering into the Apostles as a "tongue of fire."<sup>65</sup> For the Holy Ghost is Love.

In fact, from the Holy Ghost come both kinds of grace to which in the *Comedy* Dante lays claim. These two kinds are "grace

<sup>64</sup> *Par.* xxvi, 13-5. Cf. *Purg.* vi, 38; viii, 77; xxvii, 96; *Par.* xx, 115, etc.

<sup>65</sup> *Acts* ii, 3-4.

making acceptable," and "grace freely given." Meriting the former, man is united to God. Given the latter, with or without merit, man receives power "above the faculty of nature," to aid his fellow-men towards salvation.<sup>66</sup> As has been shown, the "Dante" of the *Comedy* has both kinds of grace in the highest degree, is in fact openly and by manifold insinuation represented as coequal in quality with the Apostle whose conversion was also by a miracle,<sup>67</sup> who also, and otherwise alone of living men, had in rapture immediate cognition of the divine essence, and who also in the charity so infused bore the persecutions of evil men that he might reveal God unto others.<sup>68</sup>

To modern ears, and I should think even to medieval ears, a self-exaltation like this

<sup>66</sup> ". . . Duplex est gratia: una quidem, per quam ipse homo Deo conjungitur, quae vocatur *gratia gratum faciens*; alia vero, per quam unus homo cooperatur alteri ad hoc, quod ad Deum reducatur: hujusmodi autem donum vocatur *gratia gratis data*: quia supra facultatem naturae, et supra meritum personae homini conceditur: sed quia non datur ad hoc, ut homo ipse per eam justificetur, sed potius ut ad justificationem alterius cooperetur, ideo non vocatur *gratum faciens*." St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, cxi, 1, c.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, cxii, 10, c.

<sup>68</sup> "Paulus sextupliciter excellit caeteros apostolos: scilicet quantum ad specialem electionem, secretorum Dei

must appear, must have appeared, if not lunatic, almost blasphemous in its arrogant pride. Let me hasten, therefore, to make the distinction which the scholastically minded poet ever insists upon. I mean the distinction between quality and degree. Though he might repeat in kind St. Paul's experience, and from the similar effect deduce similar causal grace, yet his experience and his grace might well be upon an indefinitely lower plane of perfection. Indeed, he confesses by implication to the sins of pride and envy<sup>69</sup> and perhaps lust.<sup>70</sup> And he is humble enough before Beatrice's rebuke. True, even in this humility of self-denunciation he still parallels St. Paul, who said: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."<sup>71</sup>

cognitionem, malorum perpessionem, virginalem integritatem, bonorum operationem et maximam scientiam qua emicuit." St. Thomas, *II Cor.* xii, lect. 3, prin°. The only one of these excellences not attributed to the protagonist of the *Comedy* is "virginal integrity."

<sup>69</sup> *Purg.* xiii, 133-138.

<sup>70</sup> At least, his terror of the purgative flame and scorching by it (*Purg.* xxvii, 13-51) have been so construed.

<sup>71</sup> *II Cor.* xii, 7.

For the "thorn in the flesh"—in the *Vulgate*, "*stimulus carnis*"—is interpreted by Dante's master, St. Thomas, as "prick of concupiscence," and was given to St. Paul, not for his damnation, but to cure him of his spiritual blindness.<sup>72</sup> Precisely so Beatrice declares that Dante

"Tanto giù cadde che tutti argomenti  
Alla salute sua eran già corti,  
Fuor che mostrargli le perdute genti." <sup>73</sup>

Really, he was shown the state of the damned, not objectively, but subjectively—in his own soul. One *knows* sin only by sinning. But even because his self-curative sinning was by divine mercy, he must be predestined to salvation.<sup>74</sup>

St. Paul's further words, however, give the final clue to Dante's attitude. When St. Paul besought the Lord that this "mes-

<sup>72</sup> "Peccatum autem ad *duo* ordinatur: ad *unum* quidem per se, scilicet ad damnationem; ad *aliud* autem ex divina misericordia, vel providentia, scilicet ad sanationem; inquantum Deus permittit aliquos cadere in peccatum, ut peccatum suum agnoscentes humilientur, et convertantur." St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxxix, 4, c.

<sup>73</sup> *Purg.* xxx, 136-138.

<sup>74</sup> ". . . haec misericordia non omnibus impenditur excaecatis, sed praedestinatis solum, quibus omnia co-operantur in bonum." St. Thomas, *ib.*

senger of Satan," this "prick of concupiscence," might depart from him, the Lord answered him: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." <sup>75</sup> Therefore Dante's "glorying," like St. Paul's, is in his "infirmities;" since in so "glorying," he magnifies the grace of God which has lifted him above them. And so indeed he would explain even the supreme "grace freely given" of his foretaste of beatitude in his momentary beatific vision of God. Having asserted the truth of this vision, he adds in his Epistle: "*Si vero in dispositionem elevationis tantae propter peccatum loquentis oblatrarent, legant Daniele, ubi et Nabuchodonosor invenient contra peccatores aliqua vidisse divinitus, oblivionique mandasse. Nam 'Qui oriri solem suum facit super bonos et malos, et pluit super iustos et iniustos,' aliquando misericorditer ad conversionem, aliquando severe ad punitionem, plus et minus, ut vult, gloriam suam quantumcumque male viventibus manifestat.*" <sup>76</sup> "There is no respect of persons with

<sup>75</sup> II Cor. xii, 9.

<sup>76</sup> ll. 357-569.

God.”<sup>77</sup> In spite of his “infirmities,” or mercifully through them, Dante has turned to the light reflected for him in Beatrice; he has been converted. He has received the “grace making acceptable” in sufficiency to be assured of ultimate citizenship in that Rome where Christ is a Roman.<sup>78</sup> For salvation, his merit, however otherwise slight, is enough increased by the very reception of the grace bestowed.

“E non voglio che dubbi, ma sie certo,  
Che ricever la grazia è meritorio,  
Secondo che l'affetto l'è aperto.”<sup>79</sup>

The degree of “openness” depends upon holy love, or charity, and his potential charity had been actualized by Beatrice, the incarnation on earth, and for him the representative in heaven, of divine charity. In other words, Dante’s saving merit is, like Folquet, “*quia multum amavit*.” Indeed, Dante may have intended to draw a closer parallel with Folquet. For Dante too might say to himself:

“Questo cielo”<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Rom.* ii, 11.

<sup>78</sup> *Purg.* xxxii, 100-102.

<sup>79</sup> *Par.* xxix, 64-66.

<sup>80</sup> Venus, the sphere of love which on earth had been “shadowed” with carnal desire. Cf. *Par.* ix, 118-119.

Di me s'impresa, com'io fei di lui,  
 Che più non arse la figlia di Belo—  
 Noiando ed a Sicheo ed a Creusa—  
 Di me, infin che si convenne al pelo;  
 Nè quella Rodopeia, che delusa  
 Fu da Demofoonte; nè Alcide  
 Quando Iole nel cor ebbe richiusa.”<sup>81</sup>

Also, assured of redemption, he might echo Folquet's further words:

“Non però qui si pente, ma si ride—  
 Non della colpa, ch'a mente non torna,  
 Ma del valore ch'ordinò e provvide,—”<sup>82</sup>

that is, as already said, of God's strength, which, made perfect in Dante's weakness, transformed Dante's very fault into a saving grace. Finally, his association with Folquet and the heaven of Venus may be insinuated in Folquet's remark:

“Ma perchè le tue voglie tutte piene  
 Ten porti, *che son nate in queste spera*,  
 Procedere ancor oltre mi conviene.”<sup>83</sup>

In other words, Dante's “will and desire” are moved in perfect accord with divine love,

<sup>81</sup> *Par.* 95–102.

<sup>82</sup> *Ib.* 103–105. Dante has already experienced this forgetfulness of past fault after his immersion in Lethe. *Purg.* xxxiii, 91–96.

<sup>83</sup> *Par.* ix, 109–111.

*caritas in patria*, but the grade of his charity is indicated by association with the earth-shadowed heaven of Venus.

If thus his future rank among the blest is comparatively modest, among men he goes possessed of another grace "freely given," that is, altogether independent of his own merit, which makes him an inspired instrument of God. God has revealed himself to him; and by that revelation he is given the gift of prophecy, both fore-seeing and far-seeing, that is, capable both of predicting future contingencies<sup>84</sup> and of interpreting things beyond sense. Moreover, with that gift is given also the ancillary gift, or grace, of "discourse," the "*bello stile*" in which Virgil had indeed been his human master,<sup>85</sup> but now he follows the dictation of a power greater than any human art, namely, of holy love,<sup>86</sup> which, in the last analysis, is but the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who is Love.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> E. g., the coming triumph of the Veltro.

<sup>85</sup> *Inf.* i, 85-87.

<sup>86</sup> *Purg.* xxiv, 52-54.

<sup>87</sup> St. Thomas, *S. T.* I, xxxvii. Cf. *ib.* II-II, clxxvii, 1, 1<sup>m</sup>: ". . . Spiritus Sanctus excellentius operatur per gratiam sermonis id, quod potest ars operari inferiori modo." In connection with the above definition of Dante's claim of the gift of prophecy, cf. *ib.* II-II, clxxi-clxxvii; also the essay in this volume entitled *Ariadne's Crown*.



In spite of these distinctions, the question presses for answer—Did Dante—not the protagonist of the *Comedy*, but the actual Dante Alighieri who wrote the *Comedy*—experience the mystic vision of God, or think so? Of course, to such a question a categorical yes or no is impossible. At most, we can only urge probabilities.<sup>88</sup> To my mind, the gravest objection to taking Dante at his apparent word is the apparently total absence of contemporary acceptance of, or even interest in, the matter. If a man of Dante's position and note had seriously put forward a claim not uncommon among mystics, we should hardly expect the conspiracy of silence that exists. His own son, Pietro, in his commentary frankly calls the literal story of the *Comedy* a "poetic fiction" (*ficta poesis*). It seems unlikely that he could so misconceive so tremendous an experience of his own father's.

Without pretending demonstrative certainty, I would offer a compromise view.

<sup>88</sup> Mr. E. G. Gardner in his *Dante and the Mystics* finds more positively affirmative grounds in the Epistle to Can Grande than I at least can quite accept. Unquestionably, assuming the rôle of his protagonist, Dante writes *as if* he had had the vision.

Feeling himself moved by a strong spirit of charity actualized by the influence of Beatrice, Dante would have theological justification for believing himself given in consequence the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>89</sup> Principal among the gifts of the Holy Spirit are intelligence and wisdom, possessing which, man "by a certain connaturalness" has cognition of divine things, not by discursive reason merely, but by a "divine instinct" above reason and participant in the intuitive faculty of separate, or angelic, intelligences.<sup>90</sup> The *terminus ad quem* of this intuitive cognition of

<sup>89</sup> ". . . qui charitatem habet, omnia dona Spiritus Sancti habet, quorum nullum sine charitate haberi potest." St. Thomas, *S. T.* I-II, lxviii, 5, c.

<sup>90</sup> ". . . circa res divinas ex rationis inquisitione rectum iudicium habere pertinet ad sapientiam, quae est virtus intellectualis: sed rectum iudicium habere de eis secundum quamdam connaturalitatem ad ipsas, pertinet ad sapientiam, secundum quod donum est Spiritus Sancti . . . sapientia, quae est donum, causam quidem habet in voluntate, scilicet charitatem, sed essentiam habet in intellectu, cujus actus est recte iudicare." St. Thomas, *S. T.* II-II, xlv, 2, c. ". . . sapientia dicitur *intellectualis virtus*, secundum quod procedit ex iudicio rationis: dicitur autem *donum*, secundum quod operatur ex instinctu divino." Ib. I-II, lxviii, 1, 4<sup>m</sup>. ". . . quamvis cognitio humanae animae proprie sit per viam rationis, est tamen in ea aliqua participatio illius simplicis cognitionis quae in substantiis superioribus invenitur." St. Thomas, *De ver.* xv, 1, me<sup>o</sup>.

divine things is the beatific vision, or intuitive cognition of the supremely divine thing, God. Dante's "poetic fiction," then, would be to represent his protagonist as possessing to its human limit a gift of the Holy Spirit actually possessed by himself, but in lower degree. Such is his procedure with all his principal characters,—except indeed with the Virgin Mary, who needs no such enlargement. But Beatrice, who represents Divine Charity, *caritas in patria*, for him, is conceived as representing Divine Charity in itself.<sup>91</sup> Lucia, the light-bringer to darkened eyes, becomes "intellectual light" itself. Virgil, the poet of a perfectly rational philosophy and unwitting prophet of Christ, becomes Reason itself made the instrument of God by the infusion of "grace freely given," but without the "grace making acceptable." Cato, martyr to self-freedom, stands for the very principle of Free Will. And so it is with the rest. Now one man actually fulfilled the requirements for making the human comedy of salvation perfect, who in this life rose out of the uttermost depths of spiritual misery to the uppermost heights of spiritual felicity. That

<sup>91</sup> Cf. the accompanying essay—*The Three Blessed Ladies*.

man was St. Paul. And Dante, always imaginatively sensitive to analogies and correspondences more or less mystical, discovered many such between his own spiritual experiences and those of the Apostle,—enough at least to justify his asking, What man so worthy to represent St. Paul as Dante? even as he had asked, What man so worthy to represent God as Cato?<sup>92</sup> But his poetically affirmative answer in his own case no more means that he regarded himself as the actual peer of St. Paul than that his affirmative answer in Cato's case means that he regarded Cato as the actual peer of God.<sup>93</sup>

In conclusion, it may be again noted that what, as Dante said, gave "perfection" to his exordium—declaration of the beatific vision—gave also perfection, in the same literal rhetorical sense, to his "comedy" as such. It is altogether incorrect, therefore, to define the hero of the poem as allegorically signifying typical Man,—as, for instance, does the hero of *Everyman*, or Bunyan's Christian.<sup>94</sup> The

<sup>92</sup> *Conv.* IV, xxviii, 121-123.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. the similar extension towards an ideal of his own character in the New Life. Cf. *The "true meaning" of the Vita Nuova* by the present writer, in *The Romanic Review*, Apr.-June, 1920.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Paget Toynbee, *Concise Dante Dictionary*, s. n. *Dante*.

"Dante" of the *Comedy*, on the contrary, represents, not mean humanity, but progressively the whole potentiality of human nature from worse than brute to equal with angel.<sup>95</sup> Or, in other words, the character is an example, not of Man as he normally is, but of Man as he may by perversion of free will, or by the grace of omnipotent God, extraordinarily become. And the comedy of Dante is that, in the beginning a potential demon, he was raised by love of the perfectly loving Beatrice to connaturalness with her, the actual peer of angels.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Conv.* III, vii, 69-88.

<sup>96</sup> This assimilating power of love is clearly stated by Albertus Magnus: "Est enim amor amantis et amati quasi quaedam unio potissimum in bonis, et naturaliter illud quod amatur, in sui naturam suam convertit amatorem." *De laudibus b. Mariae Virg.*, IV, xvii, 1.

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